

THE *Gal 10 Ng*
WORKS

OF THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD,
Dr. William Beveridge,

Late Lord Bishop of St. *Asaph*.

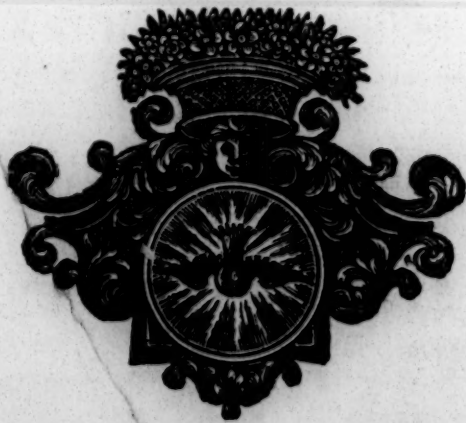
Containing all his

SERMONS,

As well those Publish'd by Himself as those since
His Death.

THE SECOND VOLUME.

THE SECOND EDITION.



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Late Lord Bishop of St. Asaph



As well as the following by himself as choicest
His Death

The Second Volume

Printed by Andrew Hartwood at the Red Lion in Trenchard Street

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and William Jones at the Wheel of St. Pauls
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The Danger of Unbelief.

LUKE xii. 46.

— *And will appoint him his Portion with the Unbelievers.*

THE two great principles of human actions are hope and fear; no considering man ever undertaking any thing of moment, but either out of hope to get something which he thinks may do him good, or else out of fear of some evil which otherwise may fall upon him: And therefore he who made us, and endued us with these principles, the better to keep us within the compass of our duty to him, hath been graciously pleased to promise the best things we can ever hope for, to those who keep his commandments, and to threaten the worst we can ever fear, to those who keep them not; which one would think should do it effectually. And yet we find the contrary by daily experience; for, notwithstanding all God's threats and promises, men still go on in a continued course of transgressing his righteous laws: and the reason is, because altho' the word of God be the firmest ground in the world whereupon to build our hopes and fears, yet the things which he hath there promised and threatned, how great soever they are in themselves, yet being not so present and visible to us as those we converse with upon earth, men have little or no regard to them, at least in comparison of what more nearly affects their senses. For men generally, and they also who are call'd Christians, live by sense, and not by faith. They do not really believe that God will do as he hath said; and therefore are seldom or never moved with the hopes of what he hath promised, or with the fear of any thing which he hath threatned; but with the hopes and fears of such things only as they themselves imagine may be good or evil for them. And their imaginations being so corrupted, as commonly to mistake good for evil, and evil for good; hence it comes to pass that the lives of men be so directly contrary to the laws of God: Neither can it be otherwise, until they are better persuaded of the truth and certainty of God's word. They can never do what he hath commanded, nor avoid what he hath forbidden, as they ought, untill they believe that he himself will do according as he hath there promised and threatened; whereas if they believed that, as certainly as they do what they see, or hear, or feel, they could not but act accordingly. So that unbelief is at the bottom of every sin that men are guilty of, and the great cause that so many are thereby ruined, and undone for ever, both in that already mention'd, and in many other respects, as I shall endeavour to demonstrate from the words which I have now read, where our Saviour himself calls that eternal ruin and destruction which sinful men are condemned to, *the portion of unbelievers.*

THAT we may understand these words aright, it will be necessary to take a short view of the context of our blessed Saviour: Having utter'd a divine parable concerning the necessity of mens being always watchful, and ready to give up their

accounts to him whensoever he shall call for them, St. Peter asked him, whether he spake that parable to them, his apostles, *or even unto all?* ver. 41. To this question, our Lord answers by another parable, touching all, but more particularly the apostles, and their successors in the government and ministry of the church; saying, *Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath;* ver. 42, 43, 44. Where we may observe the greatness of the reward here promised to a faithful and wise steward, nothing less than all that his lord hath: For the lord here spoken of, is the Lord of all things that are; and therefore all things that are, are here promised: As they are also where this Lord himself saith again, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things;* Rev. xxi. 7. All things therefore are here settled upon every one that faithfully serves this great and almighty Lord. But, on the other side, saith our Saviour, *if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men servants, and the maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* As the wise servant shall have all things given for his portion, so this foolish servant shall have a portion too, but it must be with the unbelievers; that is, in other terms, the first shall be advanced to heaven, and the other cast down to hell, as the whole design of the parable plainly shews.

THIS therefore is that which I would chiefly observe from these words at present, even that God's condemning a person to hell-fire, is here expressed by his appointing such a person his portion with the unbelievers, and by consequence that hell is the portion of unbelievers. Christ himself saith it, and therefore we cannot doubt of it, but that it is so, and that he would have us take special notice of it, that we may know how to prevent our falling into the same condemnation with them. But for our clearer understanding of it, we shall, by his assistance, consider,

- I. WHAT this portion of unbelievers is.
- II. WHO these unbelievers are, whose portion it is.
- III. WHY it is their portion.

THE first question is, What this portion of unbelievers is: How they live in the other world: Or, if ye will, what kind of place that is, which the holy scriptures call hell. This, I confess, is a very melancholy subject; it cannot be treated, nor so much as seriously thought of, without horror and confusion. I cannot begin to cast my eye upon this dismal place, in order to my taking a survey of it, but I am struck with a panick fear and dread, lest I my self, or any one that hears me, should come thither. I am sure we have all deserv'd it, and it is of God's infinite mercy that we are not there already, that we are not at this very moment feeling, by our own woful experience, what it is to be in hell; but still want to have it described to us. But, alas! who is able to describe it? No one certainly that was never there, nor they who are there neither; the torments which they there endure, being far greater than any tongue is able to express. But why then should I offer at any thing towards it? Not that I think it possible to give you a full description of it; for when I have said all I can, if any of you should come thither, which God forbid, you will find all that I have said to be nothing in comparison of what you your selves will feel. Neither do I offer at it, out of any delight I take in such an ungrateful subject: For it cannot be more ungrateful to you, than it is unto my self; you cannot be more uneasy in hearing, than I am in speaking of it. It was some time before I could persuade my self to it; and I could never have done it, but that I saw it absolutely necessary to put you in mind of the dreadful consequences of your neglect of those means which God hath appointed for your obtaining eternal salvation by Jesus Christ. I have often told you of it already; I have advised you, I have exhorted you, I have prayed you in Christ's stead, that you would be reconciled to God, and to your duty to him; that you would not any longer despise or let slip these opportunities which you as yet enjoy, of performing your devotions unto God,

and partaking of the mystical body and blood of your ever blessed Redeemer, for the strengthening of faith, and all manner of grace and virtue in you, that you may serve God faithfully upon earth, and live with him for ever in heaven. But all hath been hitherto in vain, to many of those also, for which I must give account at the last day. Because men live in ease and plenty at present, they think they shall always do so, and therefore cannot be persuaded to take any care for the future; or if they do, it is only for the things of this world, as if they had no other world to live in, or did not care how they shall live in it; which is such an egregious folly and madness, that I do not know how I shall answer it to God, to you, or to my self, at the last day, if I should not forewarn you of that miserable estate and condition you will e'er long be brought to, without a speedy and sincere repentance. And therefore how troublesome soever it may be, either to you or my self, I must be forced to do it. But that you may be sure that I say nothing of it but what you will find to be most certainly true, I shall say no more of it, than what ye have God's own word for. Ye cannot but all acknowledge, that he perfectly knows the state of those which he himself condemns: and if they consult this holy word, wherein he hath reveal'd as much of it as is necessary for us to know, ye need go no further; for there you will find it to be such, that, if duly consider'd, it will make you dread the thoughts of ever coming into it.

LET us first hear what dreadful names this place is called by in holy scripture: It is called *hell-fire*, Mat. v. 22. *The lake of fire and brimstone*, Rev. xx. 10. *The bottomless pit*, Rev. ix. 2. Luke viii. 31. *Everlasting punishment*, Mat. xxv. 46. *Everlasting shame and contempt*, Dan. xii. 2. *The blackness of darkness*, Jude 13. 2 Pet. ii. 17. *Outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Mat. viii. 12. c. xxii. 13. *Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, Mark ix. 44, 46. *Where they are tormented day and night for ever and ever*, Rev. xx. 10. *Where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night*, Rev. xiv. 11. *Where they drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and are tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb*, v. 10. *Where men are destroy'd both soul and body*, Mat. x. 28. *Where they are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*, 2 Thes. i. 9. O terrible expressions! Do not our ears tingle, do not our hearts tremble at the hearing of them? Yet this is the true state of the damned; this is the portion, the lamentable portion of unbelievers, as it is described and set forth in general by God himself: and therefore we may be confident that every tittle of it is true, without venturing to go thither to find whether it be so or no.

BUT if we would know something more particularly about it, our best way will be to consult the sentence whereby unbelievers will be condemned to this dismal place. For, as we cannot doubt but the sentence contains all they are condemned to; so we may be sure also, that it will be punctually executed in every particular. Now for this we may remember, that he who at the last day will be judge both of quick and dead, that we may not be surprized, hath told us beforehand, how he will then proceed in this great affair: That *he will come in his glory, attended with all the holy angels; and being set upon the throne of his glory, all nations shall be gather'd together before him; and that he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and that he will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left*: By the sheep, meaning the righteous, as he himself explains it, or, which is all one, true believers; by the goats, the wicked, or unbelievers. Then shall the King, or Judge, say to them on his right hand, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*; Mat. xxv. 31—34. Happy, thrice happy they, to whom the Judge of the whole world shall then pronounce this blessed sentence! How joyful will they be, how pleasant will they look, when they see themselves set on his right hand, and the Judge turning his eye towards them, smiling upon them, and bidding them come to him, assuring them, that they are the blessed of his Father, whose good pleasure it is to give them the kingdom, and therefore bidding them all, and every one, go and take possession of it, as being his sons and heirs, saying, *Inherit the kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, prepared for you, on purpose for you, from the very foundation* of

of the world! In which few words is doubtless comprehended all the joy and comfort, all the bliss and happiness, that any man either is or can be capable of.

BUT let us now hear what this righteous Judge will then say to unbelievers, to those who stand dejected on his left hand: Upon them, with a frowning and angry countenance, he will pronounce this dreadful sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*; ver. 41. A dreadful sentence indeed! as full of dread and horror as so many words can hold; yea, as all the words in all the languages in the world are able to express. The very repeating of it here, is enough to make us all tremble: But what then will they do, who shall hear it pronounced upon themselves by the Judge of the whole world? Every word in it will cut them to the heart, as being directly contrary to what they heard but just before pronounced upon others. To these the Judge said, *Come*; to those, *Depart from me*: to these, *Come, ye blessed*; to those, *Depart, ye cursed*: to these, *Inherit the kingdom*; to those, *Depart into everlasting fire*: to these, *Inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world*; to those, *Go into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*.

I AM loth to trespass so much upon your patience, as to trouble you with a more particular account of this sentence: I know it is a very ungrateful office: But howsoever, it is better for you to hear it explain'd, than to have it executed upon you. Let us therefore venture to look a little more narrowly into it.

THE first word that the Judge will say to those on his left hand, is, *Depart from me*; and if he said no more, this would be enough to strike them dead. To hear Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the only Saviour of the world, who had so often called upon them to come to him, that they might have life; to hear him now say, *Depart from me! Be gone! See my face no more!* who can bear it? What an unspeakable change will this one word make in their condition? It will strip them naked of all they either have, or hope for. By this they'll be all deprived of every thing that can do them good, and fully assur'd, that they shall never enjoy the favour of God, nor any of the pleasures that are at his right hand; but must live perpetually in extreme poverty and want, not only of all true joy and comfort, but of every thing that can make their eternal state so much as tolerable: As we see the rich man in the gospel had not so much as one drop of water to cool his tongue; and tho' he begg'd ever so earnestly for no more than what might chance to hang upon the tip of a man's finger dip'd in water, yet he could not get that; *Luke xvi. 24, 25*. And so it will be as to every thing else that can give them any ease or refreshment: They must never look for it any more; for being departed from Christ, they will depart from all light, and love, and peace, and liberty, and health, and rest; from all goodness, compassion, and mercy; from all commodities and conveniences whatsoever, so as never to see one good day, no, not one good moment any more. This is that which is usually called, *pœna damni*, the punishment of loss; whereby men are punished with the loss, not only of the fruition of the chiefest good, but likewise of every thing that can be good for them; which of it self is so great a punishment, that some have thought it the greatest of all, greater than that of sense.

AND yet, as if this was not great enough, these wretched creatures must not only depart from Christ, but he, who is the fountain of all blessings, will send them away with a curse upon them; saying, *Depart from me, ye cursed*; which word will be no sooner out of his mouth, but all the curses written in the law against sinners will immediately fasten upon them, and there stick for ever. Then their sins will all return upon them, and come as fresh into their minds as if they had been but just then committed, and every one will bring its sting and curse along with it. *Job* found something of this, when he cried out to God, *Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth*, *Job xiii. 26*. But this was nothing, in comparison of what they that are in hell continually feel. They are made to possess the iniquities, not only of their youth, but of their whole lives, so as to be always full of the gall and bitterness that is in them. Here they could make a shift to forget their sins, or at least not to trouble themselves about them; but there their sins will all come rolling in upon them,

like the waves of a troubled sea, one upon the back of another, and overwhelm them with grief and horror, do what they can. Their pride, their unbelief, their lives, their oaths, their perjuries, their frauds, their covetousness, their oppressions, their extortions, their lusts, their passions, their intemperance, their debaucheries of all sorts, their profanations of God's holy name, their contempt of his word, their neglect of his service, their slighting of his sacraments, and whatsoever else they ever did or spoke, or so much as thought contrary to God's commands, they will all now meet together like so many furies, haunting and tormenting them day and night, without giving them one moment of ease or respite. This is that *worm* which our Saviour saith, *never dieth*, Mark ix. 44. but is always gnawing at their breasts, vexing and tormenting their whole soul, so that they perpetually fret and fume, and curse themselves, and wish ten thousand times they had been better, or had never been at all, or could cease to be, or could be any thing but what they are, but all in vain.

For hark what the Judge of all the earth will say further to them, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* As they must go therefore into fire, this fire must last for ever. What kind of fire it is, it doth not concern us to know; but it concerns us rather to take care that we never know it. Be sure it is such a fire as will *destroy both soul and body*, Mat. x. 28. The body will be continually in a most acute and violent fever, that would consume it to ashes, if it was not held up by almighty God himself, on purpose that it may live in the midst of this raging and tormenting flame. The rich glutton in the gospel found it to be so, when being in hell, and seeing *Abraham* afar off, he cried unto him, and said, *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame*; Luke xvi. 24. This flame, it seems, had made him so excessive hot and dry, that it was a great torment to him: And so doubtless it is to the whole Body; no part, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, being ever free from pain and anguish, the greatest, the sharpest, that can possibly be endur'd: but if any part of the man be in greater torment than other, it is the heart or soul; it is there that the fire rageth the most horribly, the most fierce, the most furious, the most cruel and tormenting fire in the world, the fire of God's wrath and vengeance. This is that fire which burneth up the ungodly, who treasur'd up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and now they have it always burning in their breasts. He who made them is incensed against them, and he makes them see it too: But how can they be able to endure that sight? To behold the almighty Creator and Governor of the world, the chiefest, the only good that is in it; to see him angry and displeased with them, and pouring out the utmost viols of his wrath and indignation upon them; this is a dreadful sight indeed! who can bear it? The very thinking of it is a terror to me; but what then shall we think of those who are forced to undergo it everlastingly? They certainly are in far greater misery and torment than we can think them to be.

METHINKS I see them sighing and groaning, weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth, biting their lips, wringing their hands, fretting and fuming, and crying out, every one in the bitterness of his soul, *Wo is me! for I am undone! I am undone for ever! I have provoked the great God of heaven against me! I would not obey and serve him while I was upon earth, and now I am justly tormented in this flame! He was often pleased to tell me of it before, but, wicked wretch as I am, I would not believe it until now; but now I believe it, now I feel it to my cost! The arrows of the almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God set themselves in array against me*, Job vi. 4. The Lord of hosts is angry: he that made me, he that kept me all my life long, he that was once so kind and merciful to me as to lay down his own life for me, he is now angry with me! He counts me for his enemy, and is now become an enemy to me! I see, I feel he is so! His wrath is waxen hot against me, and in me; my soul is all on a flame with it! What shall I do with my self! Who can dwell in this devouring fire! Who can live with these everlasting burnings! But whither can I go for refuge! Who can hide one from the wrath of the Lamb! O that I might have my request, even that it *would please God to destroy me, that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off*, Job vi. 9. that I might live no longer in this lake that burneth with such fire and brimstone, as this is!

BUT, alas! they may complain and wish what they please, it is all to no purpose. They would never hearken unto God while they were upon earth, and now they are in hell, God will never hearken unto them; for the fire they are condemned to is everlasting: Christ himself saith so in many places of his holy word, and in this very sentence too, wherewith he will condemn them to it; and therefore they will find it to be so, notwithstanding what some false teachers may have told them to the contrary. And if any thing can aggravate the torment they are in, this certainly must do it, that they can see no end of it; but will be fully assured, that it will never end at all; that the *worm will never die, the fire will never be quenched*, Mark ix. 44. no, nor abated in the least: but when they have endured it ten thousand millions of ages, they must still endure it as many more, and after that as many more again, and so go on and on to all eternity. Oh! what a fearful thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God? How severe will he deal with unbelievers at the last day? He will condemn them to be burnt alive; in the most proper sense, to be burnt so, as always to live in the midst of burnings, yea, in that everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: which, as it is the last, so it is the severest part of the sentence. He tells the righteous, that the kingdom they shall inherit was prepared for them; *Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*: But he doth not tell the unbelievers, that the fire they must go to was prepared for them, but for the devil and his angels. And the reason is, because the angels fell, and therefore this fire was prepared for them, and they were all condemned to it before man was created. And it was design'd at first only for them: For man being afterwards created in the image of God, every way pure and perfect, he might, if he would, have continued in the same estate; and he was no sooner fallen, but he had a Saviour promis'd, by whom he and his whole posterity, if they would have believ'd in him, might have been restored to their first estate, and so might have never been in danger of hell-fire. But seeing many men, by not believing in this their Saviour, have no part or share in that salvation which is promised in him; therefore God is justly pleas'd to condemn them to the same punishment which he had before prepared for the fallen angels. He did not think good to make another hell for them, besides that which he had already made: There was no need of that, for apostate men are as guilty before him, as the apostate angels were; and therefore might justly be condemn'd, as they are here, to the same everlasting fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels. And this is put into the very sentence whereby they are condemned, as a great aggravation of the punishment they are condemned to.

AND so doubtless it is a very great aggravation of the punishment of unbelievers, that they shall be made equal to the fallen angels in shame and misery, as the righteous are *equal to the holy angels* in bliss and glory, *Luke xx. 36*. For the devil and his angels be sure are condemned to the greatest torments that can be inflicted on them: And that the same should be inflicted upon sinful men too, this may justly make us every one cry out with *Moses*, at the terrible sight upon mount *Sinai*, *I exceedingly fear and quake*, *Heb. xii. 21*. I tremble exceedingly at the thoughts of this condemnation, which in all respects will be as severe upon men, as upon the devils themselves, and in some respects more: For it will greatly augment their misery and torment, that they must be always forced to live in such company; that whilst the saints or believers enjoy the sweet and pleasant conversation of the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and are every way like unto them in heaven, the wicked or unbelievers must converse perpetually with the unclean spirits, their most bitter and implacable enemies, so full of fury, and malice, and power too, where God permits them to exert it, that one of them is enough to affright a whole army of men out of their wits: But what then will a whole army of them do to one man, to one unarm'd man, every way unable to help himself, as every unbeliever will there be in the midst of all these fiends of hell? What an hurry and confusion must they needs be in, who live with that wicked crew for whom hell-fire was at first prepared? What misery and torment do they suffer there, where they have no peace or quiet, neither in themselves, nor yet from any that are about them; but tho' all be in the height of torment themselves, yet every one helps to torment another too? What a miserable life do these wretched creatures live? never free from the greatest pain, never out of the worst company that is in the whole world; and that which

is worst of all, they can never hope it shall be otherwise with them, but are fully assured that this must be their portion for ever, by him who cannot lie, when he said to them, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

By this we may know something of that dark and doleful place, which we call hell; God grant that we may never know more of it, at least not experimentally. But this, I suppose, may be sufficient to prevail with us to take all the care we can, that we may never come there, nor go in the steps of the far greatest part of mankind, who walk directly in the way that leads thither, without ever looking before them, or considering whither it will bring them at last, even into that infernal pit, that is the portion of unbelievers.

LET us therefore now leave the place, and consider the inhabitants, these unbelievers, to whom, it seems, by our Saviour's own words, this dismal place doth in a peculiar manner belong; so that they who are sent thither, are here said to have their portion appointed them with unbelievers: whereby we are fully assured, that all unbelievers do as certainly go to the place we have now been speaking of, as we have been speaking of it. And therefore it highly concerns us to know who these unbelievers are, that we may avoid their company, and take heed that we be not found in the number of them.

Now for this, we must first observe in general, that all who do not believe what God hath said in the books of the old and new Testament, concerning himself, his Son, his holy Spirit, his works, his law, his threats, his promises, and whatsoever else is there revealed by him; all, I say, who do not actually and really believe that, are the unbelievers here spoken of: for God's word is the only ground of our faith. What he hath said, we are bound to believe only because he said it; and he who doth not do so, whatsoever or howsoever he may believe besides, he is still, in a scripture-sense, an unbeliever. And whether he believe it yet or no, he will find it to be so at the last day.

THIS being promised in general, it will be easy to give a more particular account of the great number of unbelievers that always have been, or still are in the world. For first, all heathens or pagans, who never had God's holy word, in which they should believe, preached or made known unto them, must needs be unbelievers; for as the apostle argues, *How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?* Rom. x. 14. Again, all Jews, who tho' they owned the old Testament to be of divine inspiration, yet reject the new; and thro' the blindness and hardness of their hearts deny Jesus to be the Christ, and therefore will not believe the whole word of God, and particularly not that part of it which is revealed to us by his only Son in his holy gospel; these be sure are all unbelievers. And so are all *Turks* and *Mahometans*, who prefer the *Alcoran*, the work of a wicked impostor, before the *Bible*, that is the word of God himself; and therefore do not believe Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world, as he is there said to be. These are all so plainly unbelievers in a gospel-sense, that none can deny it, who believe the gospel to be true, that is, none but they who are unbelievers themselves.

BUT tho' these *Heathens*, *Jews*, and *Turks*, be all unbelievers, yet we must not think that they are all the unbelievers that are in the world: For, to our shame and grief be it spoken, there are many such to be found among Christians themselves, among those who profess to believe Christ, and all that he hath said; yea, all who only profess to do so, but do it not, are still unbelievers, notwithstanding their profession: For *it is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness*, Rom. x. 10. And therefore, whatsoever a man may profess with his mouth, or in outward shew, unless he be fully persuaded in his mind of the truth and certainty of all that God hath said in his holy word, and really in his heart believeth on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as he is there revealed; he is, after all, as truly an unbeliever, as they who never heard of him or his gospel.

BUT are there any such among us? Men that profess to believe the gospel, and yet do it not? Men that are called Christians, and yet are unbelievers? I heartily wish there were not. But I fear, upon an impartial inquiry, we shall find that the greatest part of those who live within the pale of the church are as great unbelievers as they who live without it, or, at least, such who are so like them, that they shall have their portion with unbelievers.

FOR

For first, all that persist in any damnable heresy that overthroweth or undermineth the foundations of that religion which is revealed in the gospel of Christ, howsoever they may pretend to believe the scriptures, they really do not, but are as much unbelievers as they who reject them. As for example: The *Arians* and *Socinians*, who deny the most holy Trinity; the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, and such great mysteries of our holy religion, because they, forsooth, are not able to comprehend them within the compass of their own reason and understanding: For it is plain, that such people believe no part of God's word as they ought, because it is his word, but because they understand it; not because he saith it, but because their reason tells them it is so; and therefore do not believe God, but themselves. For if they believed any thing in God's word, merely upon his word, so as to make his assertion or revelation of it the only ground of their faith, as all true believers must do, then they could not but believe such mysteries also, which are as clearly asserted and revealed in God's word as any thing is which they pretend to understand. But I shall not insist at present upon these, because, blessed be God, there are not many of them: But some there are, too many to augment the number of unbelievers among us.

But the greatest number of them are such as St. Paul speaks of, *who profess that they know God, but in works they deny him*, Tit. i. 16. who pretend to own, that the scriptures are the word of God, and that they therefore believe all that is there written; and yet live quite contrary to it, or at least do not observe all that is there commanded. These are they which seem to be chiefly aimed at in my text: For the person here spoken of was a servant of God's own house, and had a considerable office there; and therefore must needs acknowledge the master of the house to be his lord, and profess that he believed himself to be bound to do whatsoever this his lord required of him. But seeing, instead of that, he fell to drinking and abusing his fellow-servants, therefore his lord appoints him *his portion with the unbelievers*, or, as it is in St. Matthew, with *hypocrites*, Matth. xxiv. 51. Some think that our Saviour used both these words, and that St. Matthew records one, and St. Luke the other: But they both amount to the same thing: for every hypocrite is an unbeliever, as this servant was. Howsoever he might dissemble with his master, and make as if he was his faithful servant, yet by his works he shewed that he was not; and therefore is justly reckon'd among unbelievers, and hath his portion with them.

THERE are many such unbelievers in the midst of Christ's own church, as militant here on earth: For he himself saith, *Many are called, but few chosen*, Matth. xx. 16. And, *many will say unto me at that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity*, Matth. vii. 22, 23. These were great professors indeed: They publicly owned Christ to be their Lord, they prophesied, they cast out devils, they wrought many wonderful things in his name: Who can say but these were believers? Christ himself can, and will, in effect, say so at the last day, unless they have done good as well as wonderful works in his name; for he will profess to them, that he never knew them: And if he never knew or owned them for his disciples, whatsoever they might pretend, be sure they never believed aright in him. And therefore he in anger bids them be gone from him, and tells them the reason why he doth so, saying, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*; which is the same in effect with that dreadful sentence before explained, wherewith he will condemn all unbelievers at the last day, saying, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. And he will then give them the same reason too, saying, *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, &c.* Matth. xxv. 42, &c. Not but that he will then enquire into their other sins as well as these; but these being the most plain and obvious, and yet seldom taken notice of by men, he instanceth in them only for example sake, to shew how he will proceed at the last day in a strict examination of their whole lives, what duties they had omitted, as well as what sins they had committed, either against God or their neighbour. Much less must we think, as some ignorant people have done, that because our Saviour here mentions only such acts of charity, that he will not enquire into our faith as well as manners: For they may as well gather from hence, that he will not then examine whether a man hath been holy, and just, and humble, and sober, and the like, but only whether he hath been charitable, as they

they can, that he will examine only how he hath liv'd, and not how he hath believed. But besides that we are assured from God's own word, that men must answer for their thoughts and opinions, as well as for their words and actions; and that there are damnable heresies, as well as damnable sins, 2 Pet. ii. 1. Besides that, I say, our Saviour in this very place forewarns us, that he will examine how we stood affected towards him in those very acts of charity, which he here specifies: He will say to the righteous, *I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat, &c.* and, *Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*, ver. 40. and to the wicked, *Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren* (or disciples) *ye did it not to me*, ver. 45. Which plainly shews, that he will enquire how we performed these acts of charity; and that unless we did them out of respect to him, he will reckon them as nothing, at least, not as good works. But no man can respect Christ in any thing he doth, unless he believe in him: And therefore they who do not that, whatsoever else they do, will be sure to be condemned, as workers of iniquity; such as all unbelievers are. And as all unbelievers are workers of iniquity, so all workers of iniquity are unbelievers. All who live in any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty, whatsoever profession they make of faith, how much soever they pretend to believe in Christ, and in the word of God, they do it not, but are as plainly unbelievers at the bottom, as they who never so much as pretended any such thing; as might easily be demonstrated by many arguments. I shall instance at present only in these few.

First, THE principle of self-preservation is imprinted in the very nature of all men, as well as other creatures: No man will chuse to do that which he believes will undo him. Who will drink that cup which he believes to be deadly poison? Who will go to that place, where he believes he shall be killed as soon as he comes there? Who will do that now, which he believes will make him miserable all his life after? No man that hath the right use of his senses and reason, can act so contrary to himself, to his own interest, and to that principle by which he and all men are acted. And yet this is our present case: God hath said in his word, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die*, Ezek. xviii. 20. *Tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul that doth evil*, Rom. ii. 9. *The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*, Mat. xxv. 26. Now if a man believes these and such like expressions that came from God himself, would he dare to allow himself in any sin, or in the neglect of any duty which God requires of him? Would a man steal to-day, if he was sure that he shall die for it to-morrow? Would he do any thing that God hath forbidden, if he believ'd at the same time that God would destroy him, both soul and body in hell-fire? Would he leave any thing undone, which God hath bid him do, if he really believed that he should thereby get more than all this world is worth? It is impossible; self-love and interest would not suffer him: And therefore they who continue in any wicked course of life, may talk what they please, but they do not really believe either God's threats or promises, or any thing that he hath said in his holy word; but are as great unbelievers as *Turks* or *Heathens*, or any that never heard of it.

THE same appears also from the great power that true faith hath upon the minds of men, not only in its own nature, but likewise by the grace of God, which always accompanies and works together with it. Christ himself saith, that we are *sanctified by faith in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. St. Peter, That God *purifieth our heart by faith*, Acts xv. 9. St. Paul, That Christ *dwelleth in our hearts by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. St. John, *This is the victory that overcome the world, even our faith*, 1 John v. 4. And the same apostle in one place saith, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*, 1 John v. 1. In another, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*, ch. iii. 9. From whence we may certainly conclude, that all they who are not holy, they who are not pure in heart, they who are not govern'd by the spirit of Christ dwelling in them, they who do not overcome the world, they who commit or live in sin, they have not faith, not that quick and lively faith which the gospel requires; but are all in the number of the unbelievers spoken of in my text.

BUT to prove this, I need not have gone from the place before quoted, where our Saviour saith, that he will say to those who profess to believe in him, but work iniquity, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*: For it is plain from hence, that all workers of iniquity shall be condemned to everlasting punishment: But it is

as plain also from our Saviour's own words, *That he that believeth on him is not condemned*, John iii. 18. *But he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved*, Mark xvi. 16. From whence it necessarily follows, that they who work iniquity do not believe; for if they did, they could not be condemned: But seeing they will most certainly be all condemned, they are all as certainly unbelievers; and so they will find at the last day, when they shall have that dreadful portion which is allotted for them.

BUT you'll say perhaps, in the last place, Why is it their portion in such an especial manner, that they who are condemned to hell-fire, are here said to have their portion appointed them with unbelievers? Why with unbelievers rather than any other sort of sinners? To this we may answer in short, That unbelievers, as such, are the greatest sinners in the world; for not to believe what God saith, is such an affront to his divine Majesty, as cannot be named without horror: It is giving God himself the lie, as St. John observes, *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar*, 1 John v. 10. And therefore if a man was guilty of no other sin but this, this is of it self sufficient to sink him into the lowest place in the bottomless pit: But, alas! they who are guilty of this, are guilty of all other sins too; for *without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6. or do any thing else but sin, thro' the whole course of a man's life. So that unbelievers, of all men, are sure to be condemned; there is no help in the world for it: the means which God hath appointed for our salvation, are all lost as to them. The word preached doth not profit them, not being mixed with faith in their hearing of it. Their praying avails them nothing, in that it is not the prayer of faith. The holy scriptures are but a dead letter to them; and the Lord's supper it self mere bread and wine, in that they receive it not by faith: yea, the very blood of Christ will stand them in no stead, because they do not believe in him, and so do not perform the condition upon which pardon and salvation is promised in his name; *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. *He therefore that believeth in him shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned*, as our Saviour himself hath also said, Mark xvi. 16. From whence we may infallibly conclude, that all unbelievers, and none but they, will be condemned to that horrid place before described, *the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone*: which may therefore most properly be said to be their place or portion, as belonging peculiarly unto them, and to none else; it being as certain, that all unbelievers shall be condemned to it, as it is, that all believers shall be saved from it.

AND if so, how much doth it concern us all to believe, to believe aright, as the gospel requires, so as to be fully persuaded in our minds of the truth and certainty of all and every thing that is revealed in God's holy word, with a sure trust and confidence of all and every one of the promises which are there made to mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord? For without such a quick and lively faith, howsoever we may flatter our selves at present, it is not long but we shall be tormented in that everlasting fire which is *prepared for the devil and his angels*. There is no way possible to avoid it; it is the portion of unbelievers: and if we be unbelievers, it must be our portion for ever. Wherefore, brethren, we had need to look about us, and leave no stone unturn'd, but catch at all opportunities we can get, to beget and increase in us true faith, or a firm belief of God's word; by considering often with our selves, whose it is, the word of him who cannot lie; by constant hearing and receiving it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in them who believe, and none else; by performing our daily devotions unto God, beseeching him for Christ Jesus sake to help our unbelief, to banish all doubtful thoughts out of our hearts, and to increase our faith every day more and more; by frequent receiving of that blessed sacrament, which was ordain'd on purpose to put us in mind of our Saviour, and to confirm and strengthen our faith in him; by meditating continually upon something or other that God hath said in his holy oracles, and exercising our faith accordingly upon it.

By the hearty and constant use of these means we may all attain to true faith, so as to be able to live by it, in a right belief of all the truths, in a holy fear of all the threatenings, in confident dependance upon all the promises, and in sincere obedience to all the laws; which almighty God hath revealed to us in his holy word:

word: Then we shall be true believers indeed; for then our hearts will be always fixed, trusting in the Lord, and deriving power and virtue from him, to serve and honour him all the rest of our days: And then we need not fear that we shall ever have our portion with unbelievers in outer darkness; for we shall then *be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, and shall have it accordingly confer'd upon us by him in whom we believe, Jesus Christ the righteous: *To whom with the Father and holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever.*

S E R M O N LXXIX.

Faith the Principle of inward Purity.

ACTS XV. 9.

And put no difference between us and them, purifying their Hearts by Faith.

HE that ever turns his eyes inward, may easily see all things disorder'd and out of tune there; his understanding, his will, his passions, his memory, his conscience, all depraved, and disabled from executing their respective offices as they ought: And if he have any regard to his own good, he cannot but be very solicitous to know how his mind may be freed from these disorders, which make him so unfit for the work he came into the world about; or how the faculties of his soul may be restored to their primitive tone and temper, so as to move and act, at least in some measure, according as they were at first design'd to do. But the great question is, how this may be done: Our modern, as well as the old heathen philosophers, direct us to the right use of our reason for it: And it cannot be denied, but that if our reason was still perfect, and we could always use it aright, the business might be soon effected. But if they would but impartially consult their own philosophy, and their great oracle reason, which they so much pretend to, they might easily perceive that this is plain begging the question: For it is evident from the constant experience of all mankind, (against which there is no arguing) that our understanding, or reason it self, is corrupted and debased, and therefore wants rectifying as much as any other faculty in our souls; and that we rarely make a right use of that little, such as it is, that is left us: but men generally act as much without reason, if not contrary to it, as if they had none at all of any kind to act by. Indeed our natural reason serves us to very little purpose, but only in the common affairs of this life, and often fails us in those too; but as to the great work we came into the world about, wherein our souls are principally concerned, even the serving almighty God, who sent us hither, so as to be happy for ever, reason is perfectly at a loss, no more able to direct or assist us in it, than as if there was no such thing in nature: as appears too plainly from the practice of all those who have nothing to govern themselves by, but that which we call reason. For altho' they have a confused notion of a Deity, and that something ought to be done for him in general;

neral; yet when they come to apply it to particulars, they run into such ridiculous extravagancies, as plainly shew they know not what to do.

BUT what course then must we take, to heal the distempers of our souls, that we may use our reason and all our faculties aright in the things that belong to our everlasting peace? If we consult the oracles of God, those especially which are recorded in the new testament, we may there clearly see the way which God himself hath made and prescribed for it: For he seeing how all the powers, wherewith he endued our souls, are weakened and corrupted by the fall of our first parents, out of his infinite love and compassion to us, hath been graciously pleased to constitute and appoint, not any one, but a mix'd act of several of them, to be the means of restoring them all to their primitive soundness and purity, even that which we call faith, or believing. It is to this, and to this only under God, that all things relating to our future state are ascribed all the bible over; not only our pardon, justification, and reconciliation to almighty God, but likewise the enlightening our reason or understanding, the regulating our wills, the subduing our passions, and so the reducing our whole souls into a right and sound temper: This also in holy scripture is attributed wholly to our faith, as the great means whereby it may be effected, and without which it can never be so, whatsoever other means may be used for it.

BUT this being a thing that is not so commonly understood, or at least not so fully consider'd as it deserves, I shall endeavour to make it as plain and obvious as I can, from the words I have now read, being part of that divine speech which St. Peter made in the apostolical council, met together to decide the controversy then raised in the church, concerning the imposition of Jewish rights upon such Gentiles, as were or should be converted to Christianity. Among other things St. Peter here puts the other apostles and elders (then assembled) in mind, how God was pleased to make choice of him, by whose mouth the Gentile should hear the word of the gospel, and believe; and that God, who knows the hearts, bear them witness that they did accordingly believe, upon his preaching the word to them, in that he gave them the holy Ghost, even as he had before given it to the apostles themselves, v. 7, 8. And then he adds, v. 9. *and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith*: As if he had said, *God dealt with them just as he had dealt with us*, and so made no distinction between us and them; as appears plainly from his *purifying their hearts by faith as he did ours*. If their hearts had not been purified, they would not have been fit to receive the holy Ghost; and therefore God's giving them the holy Ghost was an undeniable argument that he had purified their hearts, not by any legal ceremonies, nor any other way, but as he purified ours, even by faith.

NOW that which I would have observed from hence at present, is, that it is by faith that God purifieth the hearts of men. God is the efficient cause, it is he that doth it; but faith is the instrument or means by which he doth it. For the better understanding whereof, it will be necessary to consider, what is here meant by purifying the heart; what by faith; how faith is the means of purifying the heart; and how God effects it by that means.

FIRST therefore, by the *Heart*, in this, as in most places of holy scripture, we are to understand the inward or spiritual part of man, his mind or soul, with all its faculties or powers of acting upon objects within its reach: And so it denotes his reason or understanding, whereby he knows, thinks, argues, or judges of things; his will, with all its several motions, which we call passions or affections; his memory, whereby he retains in his mind what he hath seen, or heard, or read, and can recollect or call it to mind upon occasion; and his conscience also, whereby he accuseth or excuseth himself for any thing he hath spoken or done. All these are the several acts of one and the same soul, or, as it is here called, the heart; which at first was made most pure and spotless, acting in all respects exactly according to the will of him that made it, and to his end in making it; knowing all things it was bound to know, and thinking of all things just as they are; always chusing the better before the worse, and loving the best or chiefest good before all things else; keeping all things always fresh in its mind or memory that could be of any use, and therefore doing every thing so as to be able to reflect upon it with pleasure and delight. Thus God made man upright, in his own likeness, breathing into him a most pure and perfect soul, every way agreeable to his own divine will and nature.

But now the case is quite altered; for the heart of man is now perverted, or deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, *Who can know it?* Jer. xvii. 9. Its powers are all shaken, its motions all irregular and disorderly; nothing doth its office rightly; both the *mind and conscience is defiled*, Tit. i. 15. Many have little or no understanding, but are like to the brutes that perish; and they that have any, it is little better than imagination or conjecture: Nay, we are not *sufficient of our selves to think any thing as of our selves* that is right and good, 2 Cor. iii. 5. For our thoughts are so roving and desultory, that we can rarely fix them upon any thing; and if we do, it is ten to one but we think wrong, even about the most common and obvious things that are before us. But as for those things that are above us, and out of sight, we seldom can think of them at all: And if we ever offer to raise our thoughts towards them, they immediately scatter and divide; sometimes thinking one thing, sometimes another, seldom that which is right, and at the best, we are never certain it is so: for our thoughts so often deceive us, that we can never trust them. Hence it is that so many fall into error and heresy: All men are naturally subject to it, and well pleased with it; for their minds being vitiated and corrupted, error is more agreeable to them than truth is. And hence also it comes to pass, that men are generally averse to every thing that is truly good, and inclined to evil, merely because it is so. Neither is this the case only of some, but of all men by nature: They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, *there is none that doeth good, no not one*; Psal. xiv. 3. So grievously is the heart of man corrupted and defiled; *from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it: Nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores*, Isa. i. 6. nothing but erroneous opinions and vicious habits, folly and vanity, filth and corruption all over. By this we may see, what is here meant by purifying the heart; for the heart may then be properly said to be purified, when it is freed from these noisome diseases and distempers wherewith it is thus defiled; when it can clearly apprehend and discern between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, good and evil, when it can think aright of God, and of all things necessary to our eternal happiness; when it can receive the truth in the love of it; when it can delight in that which is good, and prefer it before vice and wickedness; when it can bring out of its treasure all good things, new and old, which it hath there laid up, and use them whensoever it hath occasion for them; when it can pass a right judgment upon its own actions, acquitting or condemning them as they really deserve: In short, the heart is then purified, when it is reduced in some measure to its first disposition, and set again to keep God's commandments, and to do all such good works as he hath prepared for men to walk in.

But how can a corrupt heart be thus purified? The apostle here tells us, it is done by faith, that is, by believing, or being fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of what God hath revealed to us in the holy scriptures, concerning himself, his Son, his will, and all such things as are necessary for men to know, in order to their serving him aright here, and by consequence to their being happy for ever: For we not being able of our selves to think or conceive aright of these things, almighty God, in great compassion to our infirmity, hath been graciously pleased to give us them in writing, under his own hand, in words at length, such words as we commonly use with one another, and so may easily understand. Now if we believe or assent to any thing which God hath thus said, because he said it, taking his word for it, this rectifies all our mistakes about it, and gives us a right notion of the thing, which otherwise we could never have had: As for example, we know not of our selves what to think of God, and can never do it as we ought; but now that God himself hath told us what he is, and what he hath done, upon our believing his word, we are able to think of him as he himself would have us.

By this means we can conceive and think of God as of one that simply is existing in and of himself, and giving existence to all things else: That he is every where, knows all things, and can do whatsoever he will: That he is infinitely wise, and great, and just, and good: That he is *Jehovah*, the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth: That he made all things by his word, upholdeth all things by his power, and ordereth all things according to his own pleasure: That it is in him we live, and move, and have our being: That it is from him that we receive whatsoever we have or

are: That the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, are all this one *Jehovah*, the Lord. For he himself having been pleased to assert these and such like things of himself in his holy word, upon our believing his word, our hearts are freed from all gross and false conceits of him; for we conceive of him, not according to our own confus'd notions and opinions, but according to the divine revelations that he himself hath given us of himself; and so are always sure that our thoughts of him are right, in that they are regulated by his own word.

So likewise for God the Son, as he is our Saviour and Redeemer: Tho' he was made known and promised to our first parents, and in them to all mankind; yet all the foot-steps of it are now worn out of the hearts of men: so that no man naturally knows any more of him, than as if no man had ever heard of him. And they who hear of him again without faith, are no way the better for it: Their hearts are still the same, stuff'd up with so much filth and corruption, that all which is said of him seems in their gross conceits to be altogether impossible. When St. *Paul* was speaking of Christ and his resurrection, the great *Athenian* philosophers looked upon all he said to be mere babbling, *Acts* xvii. 18. So it is at this day; all men have not faith, and they who have not, whatsoever their parts or learning may be, they can see no more of the mystery of godliness, than a blind man can see the sun: To them the gospel is hid, and the preaching of *Christ crucified* no better than foolishness, as it seemed to the old *Greeks*, *1 Cor.* i. 23.

BUT now faith dispels these mists, and clears up our apprehensions of those divine truths that are revealed in the gospel. For if we believe them to be as they really are, revealed and attested by God himself, they come with that power and authority upon us, that how much soever they may seem above us, we cannot but look upon them as certain as any thing that lies before us. So that by faith, as it is the evidence of things not seen, it seems most plain and evident to us, that Jesus Christ is the eternal and only begotten Son of God, one with the Father: That he in the fulness of time was conceived by the holy Ghost, and born of a pure virgin, and so became man: That as such he died upon a cross for the sins of mankind, so as to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world: That he rose again the third day, and soon after went up to heaven: That he was there set at the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him: That he hath been there ever since, and is now appearing in the presence of God for all that believe in him, and interceding with him, that they may not perish, but have everlasting life: That he is therefore able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them: And that he is the only Saviour of mankind, there being *no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved*, *Acts* iv. 12.

THESE, and such like fundamental articles of the christian faith, being asserted in the gospel by God himself, they who really believe that upon his word, have their hearts thereby possess'd with so clear a sight, and so strong a sense of them, that they are thereby purified and cleansed from all false conceptions about their salvation: For their hearts are hereby fixed, trusting only in God their Saviour for it, and for all things necessary to their attainment of it; particularly that which we are now speaking of, even the way and manner how the hearts of men may be purified, in order to their salvation: They who believe the gospel, there clearly see that it is done by faith; for that also is here positively asserted; and so it is by Christ himself, saying, *That we are sanctified by faith, that is in him*, *Acts* xxvi. 18. So also where he saith, *That we are sanctified by the truth, or word of God*, *John* xvii. 17, 19. *And now are ye clean through the word that I have spoken unto you*, *John* xv. 3. He plainly gives us to understand, that it is by his word as believed by us, and so abiding in us, *ver.* 7. that our hearts are cleansed from those impure conceits and evil thoughts which defile the man, as he elsewhere tells us, *Mat.* xv. 18. And therefore this apostle puts the defiled and unbelievers together, *Tit.* i. 15. to teach us, that all are defiled so long as unbelievers; but so long as they believe aright, they are immediately made clean and pure.

NEITHER is this all that faith doth towards purifying of our hearts: For almighty God, in his holy word, hath not only discover'd to us all such truths as are necessary to the rectifying our foul mistakes, and to the informing our judgments aright concerning himself, and actually do so upon our believing of them; but he hath there also revealed his will to us, what he would have us do, that we may serve and glorify him in the world, and at last attain everlasting life, thro' Christ

Christ our Saviour. It is true, he was pleased at first to write his law upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, but it is so defaced, that no man, by the light of nature, can read it there; and therefore he was graciously pleased to write it over again with his own finger, upon two tables of stone: And that we may be sure to understand his meaning aright, he himself hath explain'd it, by his prophets in the old testament, and by his Son, and his apostles, in the new. And if we believe what is there written, we shall not only understand aright what he would have us do, but likewise strive all we can to do it. For believing it to be the will of God, the will of him that made and governs all the creatures in the world, and us among the rest, we can never be easy in our minds, unless we act according to it, for fear of incurring his displeasure, whom we believe to be so glorious and almighty a being, as he really is. They who dare do otherwise, may be confident, that whatsoever they may pretend, they have no such thing as faith: If they had, that would soon awaken their conscience, clear their hearts of all irregular motions, and so incline them wholly to him and his holy laws, that so they may have his love and favour, whom they believe to be the chiefest, the only good in the world: So mightily doth faith operate upon the hearts of men, whensoever it comes upon them with its full strength: It turns all things upside down; it casts out all proud conceits, all inordinate desires, all unruly passions, every thing that corrupts and defiles the heart, and so purifies or restores it, as far as it goes, to a pure and holy temper again.

BUT that it may do this great work the more effectually, God in his holy word hath been pleased, not only to make known himself and his will to mankind, but he hath there also threatened so great punishments against those who break his laws, promised so many blessings to those who keep them, and hath intermixed many such divine truths among them, that, if firmly believed, must needs overpower the corrupt inclinations of our hearts, subdue all vicious habits, and keep us *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing*, or being fully assured, *that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. Our Lord himself saith, *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit*, John xv. 5. and then tells us what he means by his abiding in us, saying, *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you*, ver. 7. Whereby he hath certified us, That if his words be fixed upon our hearts, so that we live with a constant belief of what he hath said, we shall bring forth, not only some, but much fruit; we shall do all that is required of us.

To make this as plain and practical as I can, we may observe, that whatsoever was spoken by the prophets, was also the word of Christ, by whose spirit they spoke, and therefore ought to be carefully observed by us: But in the gospel we have many divine sentences utter'd with his own mouth, which we ought to have a special regard to, and to look upon every one of them as an oracle of God, for so they all really were. His antient people the *Jews*, when they had any occasion to consult him, or to ask him any material question, he was pleased to give them his responses, or his oracular answers, from between the cherubim over the mercy-seat in the tabernacle, or else by his *Urim* and *Thummim*. But now, as we have no opportunity, so we have no need of consulting him any such way; for in his holy gospel we have so many of his oracles or divine sentences recorded, that they are every way sufficient to satisfy all our doubts, and to resolve any question that we can ever have any occasion to consult him about, in reference to what we ought to do, that we may be saved. And if we diligently observe what he there saith, and lay it up faithfully in our hearts, so that his words may always abide in us, we shall be infallibly directed in every thing we ought to do; and likewise most powerfully excited and strengthened in the doing of it, so as to abhor all manner of evil, and delight only in that which is good: Which that we may the better understand, we shall briefly recollect some of his divine oracles, and shew what force they would have upon our minds, if once fixed there by a strong and lively faith.

SUPPOSE then that our hearts are distracted with the cares of this life, so that we know not how to get such things as are needful for our present support; let us but consult our oracle, and observe his answer, which is this, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*, Mat. vi. 33. Now if we really believe this answer of God our Saviour, and accordingly observe the course that he hath prescribed for it, by making it our chief care and study to
serve

serve God, so as to obtain his kingdom and righteousness, our hearts will then be at ease; for we have his own word, the greatest security in the world, that we shall not only get what we thus seek, but all things else that are needful for us. And what need we then be any further anxious and solicitous about them?

SUPPOSE that we are apprehensive of some great danger from our fellow creatures, so as to fear they may ruin us, or take away our lives; what saith the answer of God? *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell: Mat. x. 28.* If we receive this answer with that faith which it deserves, our hearts will be no longer disturb'd with the fear of what men can do unto us, but fill'd with the pure and holy fear of him who alone is able to make us happy or miserable for ever.

SUPPOSE we, being ignorant of it, should have a mind to know where to meet our Saviour upon occasion, that we may have some conversation with him, and receive his blessing: If we search the scriptures, we may there have it from his own mouth, saying, *Where two or three are gather'd together in my name, there am I in the midst of them; Mat. xviii. 20.* If we all believ'd this divine sentence, what flocking would there be to our churches? How constantly should we meet there at the hours of prayer? And how reverently should we behave our selves in his company?

IN like manner: Are our hearts puffed up with vain and groundless hopes, that we shall get to heaven only by calling our Saviour, Lord, and professing his religion, whether we practise it or no? Let us hear what our Lord saith to this: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven, Mat. vii. 21.* If we hear what our Lord himself here saith, with faith, or a full persuasion of the truth of it, such vain hopes would immediately vanish, and we should set our selves in good earnest to do the will of God, as ever we hope to get to heaven.

ARE our minds infected with proud conceits of our selves, and with an ill opinion of other people, so as to applaud our own, but judge and condemn other mens spiritual state and actions? Hark what the oracle of God saith, *Judge not, that ye be not judged: For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: And with what measure ye mete, it shall be measur'd to you again; ver. 1, 2.* This, firmly believ'd, would soon bring down our high conceits, and make us judge our selves rather than other men.

ARE our hearts harden'd in sin, so as not to repent and turn to God? Let us consult the oracle, and hear what God himself saith, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, Luke xiii. 3, 5.* If we should hear a voice from heaven uttering these words, tho' by the mouth only of an angel, how should we be started at it? Would not our ears tingle, our hearts tremble, and our knees smite one against another, as *Belshazzar's* did, at his seeing the hand-writing upon the wall? How much more, if we really believ'd this to be the voice of God himself, utter'd with his own mouth, as it really was? This would certainly break our stony hearts in pieces, melt them down into tears of sincere repentance, and turn them immediately from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that we may not perish everlastingly.

ARE our hearts, on the other side, heavy laden with the burden of our sins, so as to be ready to sink down into despair? What doth our Lord say in this case? Hark! he saith, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; Mat. xi. 28.* And him that cometh unto me, *I will in no wise cast out; John vi. 37.* What could he say, what can we desire more than this to support our drooping spirits? If we do but take him at his word, and accordingly apply our selves by faith to him that said it, this will keep our hearts fix'd, always trusting in the Lord; so far from despairing or doubting of his mercy, that we shall be always praising, and rejoicing in his holy name.

ARE our hearts so much corrupted with vice and wickedness, that it is often breaking out at our lips by cursing, or swearing, or lying, or any such filthy words? They will soon be cleansed, if we do but lay these words of our Saviour close to them; *I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment: For by thy words thou shalt be justify'd, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd; Mat. xii. 36, 37.* For he that duly believes and considers this, as spoken by the judge of the whole world, can never let any

corrupt communication come out of his mouth, but that which is to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers, Eph. iv. 29.

ARE our hearts doubtful about the other world, and therefore indifferent how we live in this? Let us but consult our great oracle, and we shall be fully satisfy'd in it. For he speaking of ungodly and wicked men, saith, *These shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*; Mat. xxv. 46. Who can believe this, and yet remain doubtful how all sorts of men shall live hereafter, or careless how he himself lives here? No, a firm and constant belief of this would purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. It would turn the scale of our affections, and make us loath and abhor sin, as much as ever we loved it. It would put us upon constant and sincere endeavours to live so in all respects, that we may not be found at the last day among those which shall be condemned to everlasting punishment, but in the number of those blessed souls that shall inherit eternal life.

THUS I might run thro all the oracles of God; and shew, that a firm and constant belief of them, is the most sovereign remedy for all the distempers of our hearts, and the best means that can be used, whereby to purify and make them holy. But then we must observe withal, that this is only the means; it is God that is the principal agent; it is he that purifies our hearts by faith, not only because faith it self is his gift, Eph. ii. 8. so that whatsoever is done by it, must be ultimately ascribed unto him, but likewise because faith it self could never do the work, unless he co-operated with it by his holy Spirit, which he therefore always gives to those who believe; as our Lord himself also hath assured, saying, *He that believeth on me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*. For this he spake, as this evangelist observes, *of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive*, John vii. 38, 39. which we see verified in many places of holy scripture; particularly in the words before my text: For the heathen, which the apostle here speaks of, no sooner believed upon his preaching the word to them, but while he was yet speaking, *the holy Ghost fell upon them*, Acts x. 44. Yea, the apostle here observes, that God, *who knows the hearts of all men, bare them witness that they did believe, by giving them the holy Ghost*, Acts xv. 8. and then adds in my text, that God put no difference between us and them, *purifying their hearts by faith*. From whence it appears, that he purified their hearts by faith, as it was accompanied, influenced and strengthened by his own holy Spirit, which he gave them upon their believing.

AND this is the course that God always did, and still doth take, for the accomplishing this great work: *Faith is the most proper means that can be used for the purifying the hearts of men*. But seeing faith cannot do it effectually of it self, as it is a man's own act; therefore God is pleased to come in with it by his holy Spirit, exciting, quickening, directing and confirming it, so as by it to cleanse the heart from all sin, and reduce it to such a temper, as he, thro' the merits of his Son, is graciously pleased to look upon us as pure and holy: and therefore he is here said, *to purify their hearts by faith*.

Now, from the words thus explained, we may observe; First, That there is but little faith in the world, but few that truly believe; I say truly: for I know there are many who profess to believe the holy scripture, so as to own it in general to be the word of God, and given by his inspiration; at least they do not deny it, nor perhaps doubt of it: But in the mean while they do not truly and actually believe, so as to be fully persuaded in their hearts of the truth and certainty of every thing that is there written; for if they did so, their hearts, as we have now seen, would most certainly be all purified. But most mens lives give us too much ground to fear, that their hearts are not right with God, and by consequence that they do not believe aright; but that our Lord had but too much reason to say, *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii. 8. I fear, if he should come now, he would find but little.

AND whereas there hath been a great dispute, whether we are first justified and then sanctified, or sanctified first and then justified; from what we have now heard, we may easily perceive that there is no ground for any such dispute; but that we are sanctified and justified both together, at the same time, and by the same faith: By the same faith whereby we are accounted righteous before God,

thro the merits of his Son; by the same, we are made sincerely righteous in our selves, thro' the power of his holy Spirit.

FROM hence we may likewise observe, how necessary it is for all men to believe, and how happy they are that do so: Forasmuch as all unbelievers are certainly in a state of sin, and liable every moment to be condemned to everlasting punishment for it; whereas they who believe, have not only their sins all pardon'd, but their hearts are also purified, and so are rightly disposed and qualified for the vision and fruition of the chiefest good; according to that divine sentence of our blessed Saviour, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*, Mat. v. 8.

HENCE, Lastly, we may see how much it concerns us all, not only to profess, but really to believe the gospel, as we are there required; and, for that end, to take all opportunities of hearing God's word read and expounded, as the ordinary way whereby faith cometh, *Rom. x. 17.* to pray to God without ceasing, that he would both help our unbelief, and strengthen our faith; and often to receive the holy sacrament ordain'd for that purpose. For it is by the constant exercise of our selves, not in one or more, but in all these means, that faith is both begun, continued and strengthened in us, so as to be able, by the assistance of God's holy Spirit, to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, and make them pure and holy. Let us therefore now resolve, by the grace of God, to do so, that we may live with a constant sense of God upon our minds; that our faith may grow stronger and stronger every day; that by it our minds may be enlighten'd, our sins subdued, and our hearts purified to that degree, that we may now shine as lights in the world, and be every way meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and so may at last receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, thro' him in whom we believe, the eternal God our Saviour.

To whom, with the Father, and holy Ghost, be all glory.



S E R M O N LXXX.

Faith in Christ, the only Means of overcoming the World.

I JOHN V. 5.

Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

UNBELIEF is not only a great sin of it self, but one great cause of all other sins. It may be truly called the mother of sin, as the devil is the father: For it was that which by his instigation brought forth sin at first into the world, and it is that which still maintains and keeps it. When the old serpent assaulted our first parents, the first attack he made was upon their faith; and when that was once shaken, he soon brought them down. God had said to Adam, and in him to the woman, which was not as yet taken out of him, *Of every tree of the garden thou may'st freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;* Gen. ii. 16, 17. But when the serpent came to the woman, the first thing he did was to call God's word into question; *Yea, saith he, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* Gen. iii. 1. and so tempted her to doubt whether God had ever said so or no? or whether he really meant as he said: And the woman began presently to make some doubt of it, as appears from her answer to the question; for she said to the serpent, *We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die,* Gen. iii. 2, 3. In which answer, she did not keep close, as she should have done, to God's word, but deviated from them in several respects. God had not said, *Ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden*, which was the tree of life, Gen. ii. 9. but; *Ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*: Neither had God said, *Ye shall not touch it*; but only, *Ye shall not eat of it*: Neither had he said, *Lest ye die*; but, *Ye shall surely die*: Whereas that expression, *Lest ye die*, implies as if it was a question whether they should or no: So that she plainly began to doubt of the truth of what God had said.

THIS the serpent takes hold of; and perceiving her faith began to fail, to strike it quite dead, he said in plain terms, *Ye shall not surely die*; just contrary to what God had said: And he gives a reason for it too; for, saith he, *God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,* Gen. iii. 5. where he again contradicts the word of God, and yet hath the impudence to appeal to God himself for the proof of what he said. God had said, *They should die in the day they eat of that fruit*; and the serpent saith, *That in the day they eat of it, their eyes should be opened*: Yet nevertheless, upon the serpent's peremptory asserting it, the woman believed him, rather than God, and therefore, *when she saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat,* v. 6. which certainly nei-

ther of them would have done, if they had firmly believed the word of God, when he said, *That in the day they eat thereof they should surely die*. From whence it appears, that unbelief was the first sin that man fell into, and that which made way for all the other sins that mankind hath since committed: For all men being then contained in the first, he thus falling by his unbelief, all fell with him into that state of sin wherein they now lie, prone to all manner of vice and wickedness.

THIS, I confess, at first sight, may seem very remote to the words I have chosen for my text: But we shall see presently, that it will give us much light into them. For which purpose, we must further observe, that altho' all men are condemned for the unbelief of their first parents; yet our most merciful Creator hath so order'd it, that none suffer, but for their own personal unbelief; the sentence being never executed, but only upon those who are guilty of it themselves, in their own proper persons, as well as in their common head: For the same day on which the first *Adam* fell by his not believing the word of God, God was pleased to raise up another *Adam*, his only begotten Son, his own eternal Word, *That whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have eternal life*, John iii. 16. So that as unbelief was the occasion of our fall and destruction in the first *Adam*, faith is now made the condition of our rise and salvation by the second: And therefore no man can now perish, but by reason of his own unbelief; because he will not believe in the Son of God, nor in what God hath said concerning him: For if he doth that, he hath God's word for it, that he shall not perish; as *Adam* had it, that he should die if he eat of the forbidden fruit. There is only this difference between them, that God spake to *Adam* by way of threatening, he speaks to us by way of promise: But both are equally the word of God; and we have the same ground to believe what he hath promised to us in Christ, as *Adam* had to believe what he had threatened to him; or rather, if possible, more: For as much as the threatening was only by the word spoken, the promise is by the Word incarnate; *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, John i. 14. in our own nature united to his divine person. And if we do but rightly believe in this Word, we shall as certainly be saved by him, as we were condemn'd by our unbelief, in the first man.

THIS the devil knows well enough, and so he did from the beginning: And therefore, as he overcame our first parents, by tempting them not to believe God's word: so he hath endeavour'd ever since, and still doth, either to destroy or corrupt mens faith in Christ. If he can but do that, he cares for no more, for then he is sure of them. For this purpose therefore he doth all he can to keep men off from believing any thing at all concerning Christ; and if he cannot do that, then he strives to make them believe wrong, otherwise than God hath said. But his main drift and design is to tempt men to deny or doubt of Christ's Divinity, as the main foundation upon which our faith is grounded. And if he can once prevail upon men to do that, he need not trouble himself to tempt them to any notorious vice; for how well soever they may seem to live, as to outward appearance, they can never truly mortify any one sin, nor do any one act that will be acceptable unto God: For whatsoever they may pretend, they can never overcome the world, no more than their first parents did, by reason of their unbelief. This we may be sure of, for we have God's own word for it; saying by his apostle, *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* Which is the same as if he had positively said, No man whatsoever can overcome the world, but only he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.

BUT that ye may more fully understand both the sense and certainty of this divine proposition, we must first explain the terms in each part of it, and then confirm the truth of the whole. The proposition consisteth of two parts, and accordingly the terms to be explain'd are only these two in general; First, What it is to overcome the world: And then, what it is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. When these terms are explain'd, it will be easy to put them together, and to shew the necessary connexion between them, and to the truth and certainty of the whole proposition.

To know what it is to overcome the world, we must first consider what that world is which we are to overcome. But we need not go far to find out that it is

a term which this apostle often useth, especially in this epistle: And therefore, lest we should be mistaken in it, he himself is pleased to tell us, in effect, what he means by it; where he saith, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,* 1 John ii. 15. For here he plainly opposeth the world to God, and makes use of that word to signify that which is repugnant or contrary to the divine will and nature: For he makes the love of God, and of the world, to be inconsistent; so that no man can love them both together. *He who loves God, cannot love the world; but he that loves the world, cannot love God.* And therefore by the world, the apostle here means the same that his master did by the word *mammon*, where he saith, *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: Ye cannot serve God and mammon,* Mat. vi. 24. But that we may be sure to understand the full meaning and extent of the word, the apostle, in the following words, tells us what the world, in his sense of the word, consists of: *For, saith he, all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,* 1 John ii. 16. Where he again asserts the world to be contrary to God, and reduceth all that is so in it to three heads; sensual pleasures, earthly riches, and pride or vain-glory: So that these three things make up the whole world, in the sense wherein he useth the word.

Now by this we may easily discover what he means by overcoming the world: For he can mean nothing else but the suppressing all inordinate desires of the pleasures, riches and honours of this world; and so every thing that hinders us from doing our duty to God, and keeping his commandments: As appears also from the context it self. In the next verse but one before my text, the apostle saith, that to the regenerate, of whom he speaks, *God's commandments are not grievous*: And in the next verse he gives the reason of it; *For, saith he, whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world*: Which would be no reason at all, unless, by overcoming the world, he meant subduing our affections to the things of this world, which are repugnant to, and oppose themselves against God's commandments, and so make them grievous to us, because they cross our corrupt inclinations. Whereas they who are regenerate, having their minds taken off from the things of this world, they are thereby freed from those obstacles which made the keeping of God's commandments difficult and grievous to them, and so observe them with ease and pleasure. And therefore, by overcoming the world in my text, he must needs mean the same thing, even such a subduing and suppressing our love and desire of the pleasures, riches, and honours of this world, that we can with ease walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. So that no man can be truly said to have overcome the world, until he hath got so much above it, as to make it his constant care to avoid all manner of evil, and to do all the good he can. This is that which the apostle here saith no man can do, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God: The meaning of which words comes next to be consider'd.

THERE be several persons who in the holy scriptures are said to be the sons of God, even all that are regenerate, and born again of water and the holy Ghost; but these are made the sons of God, because Jesus, their head, to whom they are united, is so; yea it is he who makes them so: for, *as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name,* John i. 12. And he who can give power to others to become the sons of God, must needs be so himself in a more eminent and peculiar manner: He is not only his Son, as others are, but his only begotten Son, as none is ever called but himself; but he is frequently called so, both by others, and by himself too, who best knew how he was the Son of God: *God so loved the world,* saith he, *that he gave his only begotten Son,* meaning himself, John iii. 16. and so elsewhere. From whence it is manifest, that he is the Son of God, not by adoption, nor by regeneration, but by real generation; for he was begotten of God the Father, and therefore is his Son in the highest and most proper sense that can be; so as to be in all respects of the self-same nature with the Father, according to the common notion of generation.

AND that we might not be altogether ignorant of the way how he was begotten of the Father, he himself acquaints us with as much of it as is necessary, or indeed

possible for us to know, where he saith, *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*, John v. 25. To have life in himself is proper and peculiar only to God; all things else that live, besides him, living not in themselves, but in him: *For in him we live*, saith the apostle, *Acts* xvii. 28. But this essential property of God, and so the divine essence it self, the Father gave or communicated to the Son; and that too in the same manner as it is in himself, without any difference or distinction at all, but only that the one gave it, and therefore is properly the Father begetting; the other received it, and therefore is properly the Son begotten of him. And hence it is, that altho they be both the same God, as having the same divine essence each in himself; yet the Son is so the same God, that according to what the council of *Nice* declared out of the holy scriptures, he is *God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made*; but still *of one substance with the Father*; as he himself also declared, saying, *I and the Father are one*, John x. 30. *Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ, ἡμεῖς ἐσμὲν*, we are, in the plural number, and therefore distinct subsistences; but, *we are one*, in the singular number: not *ēs, one person*, but *ἐν ἑσμέν, we are one Being, one Essence, one Substance, one Jehovah, one God*. And so they who heard him speak these words, plainly understood him, for they took up stones to cast at him; and the reason they gave him for it, was because, as they said to him, *thou being a man, makest thyself God*, ver. 33. In like manner, upon another occasion, when Jesus had called God his Father, the Jews sought to kill him, because he said, that God was his Father, *making himself equal with God*, John v. 18. which shews, that when he called himself *the Son of God*, or said, *God was his Father*, they apprehended his meaning to be, that he himself was God equal to the Father: And so plainly it was, as the catholick church likewise hath all along believed.

In this sense therefore, we ought to believe Jesus to be the Son of God; because this is the sense wherein the holy scriptures declare him to be so: and he that believes it in any other sense, his faith is groundless and null, as having no foundation in God's word; so that he cannot properly be said to believe it at all. And verily it is our unspeakable comfort and happiness, that this great fundamental article of our whole religion, even that Jesus Christ is so the Son of God, as to be himself truly God, of the same nature, substance, and glory with the Father, is so clearly, so fully, so frequently revealed to us in the holy scriptures, that none, unless they wilfully shut their eyes, but may easily see it; and none can deny or doubt of it, but only such as the devil hath got the same power over which he had over our first parents, to make them deny or doubt of what God himself hath said.

But I hope none here present do so; and therefore I need not insist any longer upon it, especially considering that it hath been so fully proved by many learned men, beyond all contradiction. Howsoever, that I may contribute something towards the confirming your faith in it, I shall only observe two or three things, not usually taken notice of, in our Saviour's life and actions while he was upon earth, which plainly demonstrate him to be the true God.

First, therefore, when Satan would have had Jesus fall down and worship him, Jesus said unto him, *Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, Mat. iv. 10. Which shews, that he judged it to be utterly unlawful to worship any but the true God, and detested the very mention of it; and yet he himself had such worship often performed to him: A leper worshipped him, Mat. viii. 2. A certain ruler worshipped him, *cb.* ix. 18. The woman of *Canaan* worshipped him, *cb.* xv. 25. The man that was born blind worshipped him, John ix. 38. His own disciples worshipped him, Mat. xiv. 33. The women that came to his sepulchre after he was risen, worshipped him, Mat. xxviii. 9. His apostles also worshipped him after his resurrection, Mat. xxviii. 17. and again at his ascension, Luke xxiv. 52. All these, and doubtless many others, worshipped him, and yet he never rebuked them for it; as he would certainly have done, if he had not been the true God, to whom alone such worship was due, according to his own words. All acknowledge him to be a good man; but no good man, nor any good creature whatsoever, would have suffered himself to be thus worshipped as a God, without reproving those who did it. When *Cornelius* fell down to worship Peter, he took him up, saying, *Stand up, I my self also am a man*, Acts x. 25. When the priest of *Jupiter*, with the men of *Lystra*, would have done sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, the apostles rent their clothes, and ran in among them, cry-

ing out, and saying, *Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you*, Acts xiv. 14, 15. When St. John would have worshipped the angel, the angel said to him, *See thou do it not; I am thy fellow-servant, worship God*; Rev. xix. 10. And so again, Chap. 22. 9. But we find nothing of this in Christ: When people worshipped him, he never forbade them, nor reprov'd them for it; but accepted of it, and shewed himself to be well pleased with it, by working miracles for them that did it: Which he be sure would never have done, if he had not been the true God, whom all the creatures in the world are bound to worship. But it is no wonder that he accepted of divine worship from men, when it is the divine command, that *all the angels worship him*, Heb. i. 6. *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*; John v. 23. And, *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*; Phil. ii. 10, 11.

AGAIN I observe, that Christ, in his revelation of the divine will, always speaks as from himself in his own name. He never saith, as the prophets are wont to do, *The Lord hath spoken*; or, *Thus saith the Lord*: but, *Thus I say, I say unto you, Swear not at all. I say unto you, Love your enemies. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*: And so all along he speaks with authority, with divine authority; not as the scribes, nor as the prophets, nor as any other creature must have done, that would not usurp upon God's prerogative: Neither doth he call upon men, as the prophets do, *To turn unto the Lord*, but bids them come to him; *Come to me all ye that labour, take my yoke upon you, learn of me*; Mat. xi. 28, 29. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*; John xiv. 1. *Abide in me, and I in you*; John xv. 4. *If ye love me, keep my commandments, &c.* Well might the officers, which were sent to apprehend him, say, *Never man spake like this man*, John vii. 46. For this could not be the language of Man, but God, especially seeing he makes his promises, as well as laws, in his own name, and such promises which none but God can ever perform; and therefore would never make: as *I will give you rest*, Mat. xi. 28. *I will send the Comforter*, John xvi. 7. *I will raise him up at the last day*, John vi. 39, 44. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*; Chap. xii. 32. *Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*; Mat. xvi. 18. Many such expressions came from him, which discover'd him to be God, as plainly as those places do it, where he is expressly called so.

BUT that which I look upon as most observable of all, is, that he did not only speak, but act in his own name, and by his own power. He saith, *I confess, in one place, I am come in my Father's name*; John v. 43. And in another, *The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me*; John x. 25. But we must observe, that he doth not say, in the name of God, but of *his Father*. If he had said, in the Name of God, some might have been apt to think, tho without ground, that he himself was not God; for if he was, it would have been more proper to have said, he came or acted in his own name. But to prevent that mistake, he saith only in the name of the Father, and so he acted even as God in the name of the Father, because he received his divine essence, and so the power by which he acted, from the Father. In which sense he saith, *I can of my self do nothing*, John v. 30. And, *I do nothing of my self, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things*; Chap. viii. 28. And, *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not*; Chap. x. 37. And so all along he speaks of the Father, as the person from whom he received his power, as being his Son; but still he acted by that power immediately from himself, as being God.

To prove this, we need go no farther than the works of creation, wherein God did most clearly exert and shew forth his power and Godhead, in producing all things out of nothing by a word of his mouth: He only said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, Gen. i. 3. *Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together in one place, and it was so*, ver. 9. *Let the earth bring forth grass, and it was so*, ver. 11. Thus the whole creation was finished, only by God's expressing and signifying his will, that every thing should be as he pleased, and so it was; which was such an act of divine power, that no creature could ever pretend to it, nor indeed can be capable of it, it being an incommunicable perfection of the divine nature to act so immediately in and of it self, and perfectly according to its own will.

AND

AND yet this was the way that Christ acted when he was upon earth, and so demonstrated his divine power and glory the same way as God had done it in making of the world. For when there came a leper to him, saying, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, Jesus only said, *I will, be thou clean*; and it was so; *the leprosy was immediately cleansed*, Mat. viii. 2, 3. When at several times he saw Peter, and Andrew, and James, and John, and Levi the Son of Alphaeus, he said, *Follow me*, and it was so; *they left all, and followed him*, Mat. iv. 18, 21. Mark ii. 14. When there arose a great storm, and the waves of the sea beat into the ship where he was, he only said, *Peace, be still*, and it was so; *The wind ceased, and there was a great calm*, Mark iv. 38. When he came to Jairus's house, and found his daughter lying dead, he only said, *Talitha cumi, Damsel arise*; and it was so; *the damsel straightway arose, and walked about*, Mark v. 41. When they brought to him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, he only said, *Ephphatha, be thou opened*, and it was so; *for straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain*, Mark vii. 34, 35. When he saw a fig-tree with leaves, and no fruit upon it, he only said, *Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever*; and it was so; *for presently the fig-tree withered away*, Mat. xxi. 19. When he came near the city Nain, and saw a dead man carried out to be buried, he only said, *Young man, I say unto thee, arise*; and it was so: *for he that was dead sat up, and began to speak*; Luke vii. 14. When Lazarus had been dead four days, and was laid in his grave, he only said, *Lazarus, come forth*; and it was so; *he that was dead came forth*; John xi. 43. There are many such instances to be found in the gospel, of Christ's acting merely by his word; and which, if it be possible, is more remarkable, he did the same by his apostles, who wrought miracles only in his name: As when Peter saw a lame man, he said, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk*; and he did so, Acts iii. 6, 7. At Lystra he said to the cripple, as it is in the old Greek manuscripts, *In the name of Jesus Christ, stand upright on thy feet*; and so he did, Acts xiv. 10. Ananias said unto Saul, *The Lord (even Jesus that appear'd unto thee in the way as thou camest) hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight*, Acts ix. 17. which gives light to Acts xxii. 13. Thus Peter said to Eneas, *Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise, and make thy bed*; and he did so, Acts ix. 34. St. Paul said to the damsel possessed with an evil spirit, *I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her*; and so he did, Acts xvi. 18. This was their constant way of working miracles, insomuch that the Jewish exorcists taking notice of it, they also called over them that had familiar spirits, in the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, *We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches*, Acts xix. 13. In all which it is to be observed, that Christ had no sooner spoke the word with his own mouth, or by his apostles, but the thing was done. In all which it is to be observed, that the word was no sooner out of his mouth, but the thing was done: which plainly shews, that he could do what he would, only by willing it should be done: Which, as it is the proper notion of Omnipotence, so it is an undeniable argument and demonstration of his Godhead. From all which it appears, that God himself, in the holy scriptures, hath declared both by his words and works, that Jesus Christ is his own natural or essential Son, of the same nature and substance with himself; and therefore whosoever would believe aright, according to his own word, must thus believe, that *Jesus is the Son of God*.

THE terms being thus explained what it is to overcome the world, and how we are to believe that Jesus is the Son of God; we are now to consider what dependence one of them hath upon the other, and so the truth of this whole proposition, that no man can overcome the world, but he who believeth Jesus to be the Son of God. But for this we need not go from the text it self, which being God's own word, cannot but be true; and we shall have all the reason in the world to believe it, whether we understand the reason of it, how it comes to be so, or no. For it is not the reason of the thing, but the testimony of God, that is the true ground of our faith: and how many reasons soever may be given for it, they add no more to the ground of our believing it, than they do to the truth it self. What God saith is true, whether we know the reason of it or no; and if we can give ten thousand reasons for it, we are still to believe it, only because God saith it: For otherwise it is not faith, but science; and therefore all reason hath to do in this case, is only to search into the grounds we have to believe that God said it: Which being once supposed or proved, we must believe

the thing it self only upon God's word. And we have all the reason in the world to do so, because he cannot lye; and therefore what he saith cannot but be true: And we are bound by our reason it self to believe it, altho it be above our reason, so that we cannot understand or comprehend it.

INDEED in this our corrupt and imperfect state, our understandings are so weak and dark, that we can scarce see into the reason of the least thing that is before us, much less into these great things so much above us, which God hath been pleased to reveal to us, and which need not have been reveal'd, if we could have known them without it. And therefore, if there be any such thing as reason in us, nothing can be so contrary to it, as not to believe the great mysteries of the gospel, as the Divinity and Incarnation of the Son of God, altho revealed by God himself, because we cannot comprehend them. For by the same reason, if it may be so called, we must believe nothing at all, at least concerning God: For we can no more comprehend his omnipresence, his omniscience, his eternity, and other his divine perfections, than we can how three persons are in one nature, and two natures in one person. We can no more comprehend the divine nature, than we can the Trinity of Persons in it; and yet they who pretend to be the great masters of reason, have so little of that which they pretend to, as to believe one, and not the other, altho they have the same reason for both, even the word of God himself; and altho nothing which God hath said in his holy word be so much above our reason, as it is contrary to all reason not to believe what he hath said.

WHEREFORE he having said, *That no man can overcome the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*; we need look no further for a reason why we ought to believe it, it being as certain as God is true. Yet nevertheless, it being a truth wherein all men are highly concerned, that they may be more deeply affected with it, I shall endeavour to give you a little more light into it, by setting before you, and proving these three propositions.

1. THAT no man can overcome the world but by Jesus Christ.
2. No man can do it by him, except he believe in him.
3. No man can believe in him for it, except he believe him to be the Son of God.

THE truth of the first proposition will appear sufficiently, by shewing two things. 1st, That no man can overcome the world by himself, or his own strength. 2dly, That there is no other way to do it, but by Christ. As for the 1st, We need no divine revelation for it, for we cannot but be sensible of it our selves. We find, we feel it by our own sad experience, that we have not strength enough in our selves to withstand, much less to overcome the world; but do what we can, something or other in it will have power and dominion over us. And it is no wonder our first parents in their best estate, in their full strength, were overcome by it. How then is it possible for any one now to overcome it? I know that many, both antient and modern philosophers, have talk'd very finely of vice and virtue; but it was mere talk. Where it came to the point, they were no more able of themselves to subdue the one, and practise the other as they ought, than they were to remove mountains, and create worlds. Indeed our whole nature is corrupted, and all the powers of our souls are out of tune; and therefore our actions must needs be so, whether we see it or no. And lest we should take no notice of it our selves, God himself hath often put us in mind of it; assuring us, *That there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not*; Eccl. vii. 20. *That the wickedness of man is great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually*; Gen. vi. 5. And, *that we are not sufficient of our selves to think any thing as of our selves*; 2 Cor. iii. 5. And if we cannot so much as think, how can we do any thing that is good of our selves? And if we can do nothing at all, how can we do so great a thing, as to overcome the whole world? No; there is no way possible for us ever to do it by our own strength.

BUT, blessed be God, he hath found out, or rather he hath made a way for us to do it; but he hath made only one way, and that is by Jesus Christ: Who hath told us with his own mouth, *Without me ye can do nothing*; John xv. 5. whereby he hath excluded all possibility of our overcoming the world, subduing sin, or doing any thing that is good without him. To the same purpose is that of the

apostle, where he saith, *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Christ*; Acts iv. 12. Where, by being saved, we are not to understand, as men commonly do, only our eternal salvation in heaven, but all things necessary in order to it; and especially our being saved from our sins, from the strength as well as from the guilt of them; which we can never be any other way but by Christ: But by him we may; this being the great end wherefore he hath done and suffered so much for us. For this purpose it was, that *the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*; 1 John iii. 8. For this purpose he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works; Tit. ii. 14. For this purpose he was raised up, that he might turn every one of us from his iniquities, Acts iii. 26. For this purpose he was exalted with the right hand of God, that he might be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins; Acts v. 31. And for this purpose he ever liveth to make intercession for us, that he might be able to *save to the utmost all that come unto God by him*; Heb. vii. 25. And therefore we cannot doubt, but by him we may be enabled to overcome the world, and all things in it, which can any way impede our salvation by him; especially considering, that altho' the first Adam was overcome by it, he the second hath overcome it, both for himself and us. *Be of good cheer, saith he, I have overcome the world*; John xvi. 33. So that now, under his banner, we fight against a conquer'd enemy, and therefore need not fear being overcome, so long as we keep close to him; who hath all power given him, both in heaven and earth, and is always ready to give us as much of it as we have occasion for in any of our spiritual conflicts; inasmuch, that as we can do nothing without him, there is nothing but we can do by him. As St. Paul found by experience, when he said, *I can do all things thro' Christ which strengtheneth me*; Phil. iv. 13.

AND as no man can overcome the world, but only by Christ; so no man can overcome it by him, without believing in him. That the whole of our salvation, and so this, as the main part of it, depends upon our believing in Christ, is so plain to any one that reads the gospel, that I need not insist upon it. I shall only observe in general, that in the verse before my text, St. John ascribes our victory over the world so entirely unto our faith, as if it self was the victory it self; saying, *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*. That St. Paul calls faith a shield, whereby we are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; Eph. vi. 16. That St. Peter saith, *God purifies our hearts by faith*, Acts xv. 9. That when Satan had desired to have the said apostle and his brethren, Christ only pray'd for him, that his faith might not fail, Luke xxii. 32. And that Christ himself saith expressly, *That we are sanctify'd by faith that is in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. And elsewhere he saith, *That he that believeth in him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already*; John iii. 18. And again, *I am come a light, saith he, into the world, that whosoever believeth in me, should not abide in darkness*; John xii. 46. And to name no more, he saith, *Abide in me, and I in you: As the branch cannot bear fruit of it self, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is wither'd*: John xv. 4, 5, 6. From all which it appears, that we cannot overcome either the world or the devil; we cannot be enlightened, nor purified, nor sanctified, nor enabled to do any thing that is good by Christ himself; except we believe in him, and except we believe so as to abide continually in him, as a branch doth in the vine, so as to receive nourishment and virtue from it, to bring forth fruit. It is by faith that we are engrafted into Christ, and made members of his body, and so partake of that holy Spirit which proceeds from him. And therefore unless we believe in him, we can derive no power or virtue at all from him, no more than as if there was none at all in him. When he was upon the earth, in his own country, it is said, *He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief*: Mat. xiii. 58. And so it is to this day. The great reason why he doth not many mighty works for us, and that we do not many mighty works by him, is merely because of unbelief: Men will not believe in him, and then it is no wonder they are never the better for him, nor able to overcome the world, and come to God by him; it being as impossible to do any good without believing on him, as it is to do it without him.

BUT

BUT then, in the last place, no man can believe in Christ for it, except he believe him to be the Son of God, of the same nature and glory with the Father. For our believing in him for power to overcome the world, necessarily implies our believing him to be both able and willing to give it us; and by consequence we trust and depend upon him for it. But this we neither ought nor can do, except we believe him to be God. We ought not to do it, because we are commanded to *trust on the Lord with all our hearts*, and therefore on nothing else, *Prov. iii. 5*. Indeed, to trust on any thing besides God, is one of the greatest sins that a man can be guilty of: It is idolatry it self: it is giving that honour to a creature which is due only unto God. And yet this all are guilty of, who do not believe Christ to be God, and yet trust on him as if he was. But I think we have no great cause to fear that any, at least considering persons, should fall into that sin. For I do not see how any man that considers what he doth, can possibly believe and trust on Christ for any thing at all, much less for his salvation, except he believe him to be the Lord God almighty.

To make this as plain as I can: There are two things absolutely necessary to our eternal salvation, as without which we cannot be capable of it. First, That our sins, whereby we have offended almighty God, be all pardon'd. Secondly, That we overcome the world, so as to be and do good in it. But we can believe in Christ for neither of these things, unless we believe him to be God.

As for the first, We cannot but be all sensible, that we have often broke those holy, wise, and righteous laws, which almighty God our maker hath prescribed to us, and that we have thereby incurred his displeasure, and made our selves obnoxious to the death which he at first threatened, and to all the curses that he hath denounced against those who continue not in all things which he hath commanded, to do them, *Gal. iii. 10*. By which means, altho many, by reason of the blindness and hardness of their hearts, do not, or will not see it; yet we all stand upon the brink of the bottomless pit; and should God open our eyes, and shew us the danger we are in, we should not be able to endure our selves, but should be ready to sink down into horror and despair. What then shall we do? Whither shall we go for succour? Shall we go to God? It is true, he is merciful, but he is just too. And besides, it is he whom we have offended, and therefore cannot in reason expect any favour at his hands, no more than the fallen angels can, without making him satisfaction; much less can we imagine that he should break his word for us. But shall we then go to Christ? If he be not God, what can he do for us? Can a creature appease the wrath, satisfy the justice, or defend us against the power of his and our almighty Creator? No more than we can do it for our selves. What if he spent his whole life in doing good? It was no more than every man is bound to do. And what tho he suffered a cruel death, what is that to us? If he was a mere human person, as every one of us is, both his actions and his sufferings must needs all terminate in himself, we can be no more concerned in them, than we are in the life and death of any other great and good man; much less can all mankind be said to suffer that death in him which God hath threatened: for according to this supposition, none at all were in him, he being only a single human person of himself; as every other man is. How then can any one who doth not believe him to be God, notwithstanding believe and trust on him for the pardon of his sins, and for God's reconciliation to him? No man certainly can do it, but he that can believe impossibilities, and reconcile plain contradictions; that is, no man that hath either sense or reason.

WHEREAS on the other side, he who believes Christ to be God as well as man, hath all the reason in the world to believe in him for God's mercy in the pardon of all his sins: For he being God, of the same substance with the Father, and having taken upon him not any particular human person, but the human nature in general, and united it to his own divine Person, whatsoever he suffer'd in that nature could not but have respect to all mankind, as partaking of that nature wherein he suffer'd; and he who suffer'd in it being of infinite power and glory, his sufferings could not but be of infinite value and merit, and so fully satisfactory to the divine justice for the sins of mankind in general: Wherefore he is said to have *tasted death for every man*, *Heb. ii. 9*. and to be made a *propitiation for the sins of the whole world*, *1 John ii. 1, 2*. For he, the second *Adam*, having suffer'd that death in the whole nature of man,

which God had threatened to it in the first, he hath thereby taken off our obligations to undergo it; and *hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. And therefore he who believes him to be God as well as man, may well believe in him for pardon, to whom all the prophets give witness, *that thro his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*, Acts x. 43.

THE same may likewise be said of grace and power to overcome the world, and do good. No man can believe in Christ for that neither, but he who believes him to be truly God; for it is God that sanctifies us, *Ex. xxxi. 13*. It is God that purifies our hearts, Acts xv. 9. It is God that is the author of every good and perfect gift, James i. 17. It is God that makes us *perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight*, Heb. xiii. 21. It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure, Phil. ii. 13. In a word, it is God that is the chiefest, the only good in the world, without whom nothing can either be or do so: And therefore he who doth not believe Christ to be God, how can he believe in him for such things, which none can do but only God; as the scriptures plainly assert, and he himself also must believe, if he believe them to be the word of God. Such a man's faith would contradict and destroy it self, and so be no longer faith, but mere fiction and fallacy. But if we believe Christ to be God, as all men ought, and have all the reason in the world to do, then we may well believe in him for grace and virtue, every thing that is necessary to our overcoming the world, and so to our being holy here, and happy for ever. We may well believe he can give it us, if he will, because he is God: And we may as well believe he will do it if he can, because he is man, and became so on purpose to qualify himself for it; that we who can never overcome the world without him, may be enabled to do it by him, as I have shewn already we may.

WHEREFORE, to sum up the whole argument; seeing we can never overcome the world, but only by Jesus Christ; seeing we can never do it by him, unless we believe in him; and seeing we can never believe in him, unless we believe him to be the Son of God, of the same nature with the Father: therefore we may truly say with the apostle, *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Now from the premises thus briefly laid down, many very useful inferences may be drawn; I shall instance at present only in three. First, From hence we may observe the absolute necessity of believing the great article of our Christian religion, that upon which our whole religion is founded, even that Jesus Christ, the founder of it, is not only a mere man, or any other creature, but the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father. For as it is truly declared in the profession of our faith, commonly called the creed of St. Athanasius, *Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholick faith: As, that there are three Persons in the Godhead; that Jesus Christ is the second of these Persons, the Son of God; and, that he is both God and man*. This is the catholick faith, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved: For he cannot overcome the world, and by consequence can do nothing in order to his salvation. Wherefore, as ever ye desire to be saved, you must be sure to continue firm and stedfast in this faith. Let not any *Arians, Socinians, Turks or Mahometans*, ever seduce you from it: And if any attempt to do it, look upon them as the devil's agents and factors, employ'd by him to ruin and destroy you; for so they will certainly do, if they can ever by his help prevail upon you to deny the Godhead of Christ your Saviour, that being in effect to deny him to be your Saviour: for that none can be, but only God. And if he do not save you, I am sure no body else can.

IN the next place, we may from hence also observe what ground we have to believe that article of our church; which saith, *They also are to be had accursed, that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature: For holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved*. For to this we may add from what we have now heard, that the same holy scripture doth also declare, *That no man can overcome the world, and so be saved by Christ himself, but he who believes him to be the Son of God*. From whence it necessarily followeth, that whatsoever law or sect a man professeth, and how diligent soever he may be to frame his life according to it; yet, unless he be-

lieves this, he cannot be saved. I know some have thought this to be very hard; that they who never heard of Christ, and therefore cannot believe in him, should not be saved, how well soever they live: But the world is not governed by mens thoughts, but by God's will. It may seem as hard to any one that considers; that none of the apostate angels are saved. But none ever thought this to be so; why then should they think so of that? but let men think what they please, God hath said, *That no man can overcome the world, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*: And therefore that must be true.

Lastly, From hence we may observe what course we must take, if we desire to overcome the world, so as to get to heaven: We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, of infinite power and goodness, most perfectly able and willing to do every thing for us and in us, that is any way necessary to our salvation. And therefore we must believe and trust on him for grace to repent of all our sins; for God's mercy in the pardon of them; for power to overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and for such influences of his Holy Spirit, as will make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. We must heartily and constantly use the means which he hath appointed for our obtaining grace and salvation; but we must keep our faith and confidence fixed upon him, and upon him only, to make them effectual to the purposes for which he hath appointed them. If we do this, as we need not, so we ought not to doubt, but that he will so assist, conduct, and guide us through the whole course of our life, that at length we shall attain the end of our faith, even the eternal salvation of our souls, by him:

To whom, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and for ever.

S E R M O N LXXXI.

Faith in Christ, our title to the privilege of
sonship.

JOHN i. 12.

*But as many as received him to them gave he power to become
the Sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.*

ONE great end of the ministry that Christ hath established in his church, is, To direct men unto the right way that leads to life, and to persuade them to walk in it; or as he himself words it, *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. And this we do, not in our own, but his name, by virtue of that commission, and according to those instructions which we have received from him: For as this apostle tells us, *We are ambassadors for*
Vol. II. I Christ,

as tho God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God, 2 Cor. v. 20. And as it is only in his name we do it, so it is he alone who can make what we do effectual; and our instructions and exhortations are to no purpose, unless they be accompanied, assisted and influenced by his holy Spirit. Though *Paul* himself plant, and *Apollos* water, it is God only that gives the increase: Wherefore in his name, and in an humble confidence of his assistance, I shall make use of the most probable means I can think of at this time, whereby to accomplish that great and glorious end; that all here present may, by his grace and blessing, be prevailed upon to give up themselves wholly to the service of the living God, and both to believe and live according as they are taught and required to do in the gospel of his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

FOR this purpose therefore, I humbly beseech you all, in the name of Christ, to look every one into his own breast, and consider seriously, whether you do not desire to be really happy; to be free from care and fear, and all such turbulent and unruly passions as are apt to trouble and discompose your minds; to be always calm, serene, and pleasant, in the midst of all the storms and tempests you meet with here below: To live continually under the particular care and conduct of that infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, that governs the world, and orders all things in it: To have the whole creation at your service, and all things in it to concur and work together for your good: To have the Almighty Creator himself your friend, your protector, your saviour, your sanctifier, your comforter, your guide, your sun, your shield, and your exceeding great reward: To have him always smiling upon you, rejoicing over you, discovering himself well pleased with you, and manifesting his special love and favour to you; and so to have all your desires completely satisfied in the enjoyment of him, and his perfections, which are infinitely more than you can possibly desire. This is to be happy indeed: and whatsoever else comes under that notion, is nothing else but fancy and delusion: And therefore if you desire to be truly happy, as I am confident you all do, this is the only happiness you must desire; for whatsoever else you desire besides this, will deceive and frustrate your expectations, and be so far from quieting and satisfying your desires, that it will but ferment and encrease them.

AND as this is the only happiness that we are capable of, so there is no way whereby it is possible for us ever to attain it, but only by Jesus Christ, without whom never any mortal man was, or ever can be, thus truly happy. But by him there is none here present but may be so, if we will but perform those easy conditions which he in his holy gospel hath prescribed in order thereunto, which I shall now endeavour to explain unto you; and, the better to excite you to the performance of them, shall likewise shew how exceeding happy they are who duly perform them, and all from the words that I have now read: The words of Christ's only beloved disciple, who being directed and inspired by him to write his gospel, begins it with an assertion of his eternal Godhead, as the chief foundation of it; for without that it would have been no gospel, no glad tidings to mankind at all. All our hopes and expectations from Christ revealed in it, being grounded only upon the meritoriousness of his sufferings for us, and that upon the divinity of the Son that suffered: So that take away that, and he would be no more able to save us than we are to save ourselves. And therefore that we might be fully assured, that the person he was now to write of, is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him, the evangelist first acquaints us, that he was *in the beginning with God*, as to his person, and in his nature is *God himself*: That he is so far from being a mere creature, that *all creatures were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*, ver. 1, 2, 3. And then he declares how this divine person, the mighty creator of the world, was pleased to come himself into the world he had created, to be the life and light of mankind in it; and that he came in a more particular manner to his own, ver. 11. that is, the nation of the *Jews*, which are therefore called his own; because they were of his kindred, and more nearly related to him than the rest of mankind, they being all of the stock of *Abraham*, out of which he was pleased to take the nature of man, and unite it to his own divine person. And that was the reason wherefore God was pleased to chuse them before all others to be his own peculiar people, because they were nearer in blood to his only-begotten Son, as man, than any other people in the world besides: And therefore it was that he took such special care of them, wrought so many miracles for them, sent his prophets among

among them, revealed himself and his will so plainly to them, and sent his Son to them first, who is therefore said to come unto his own. But notwithstanding the special favour that God had for them upon the afore said account, yet when his Son came to them, they would not receive him; *He came unto his own, saith the apostle, and his own received him not*: that is, they would not acknowledge him to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; but instead of that, they derided him, they abused him, they reproached him, they spit upon him, they arraigned him, they condemned him, and at last they put him to death, as if he had been a malefactor. But then it follows, *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*. As many as received him, whether they were *Jews* or *Gentiles*: For tho the *Jews* were his own, they were not his only people; all the families upon earth being his as well as they. And altho he was more nearly allied to them by his birth, yet the nature he then assumed was the same that all mankind is of; and therefore all men have as much interest in him, and are as capable of being saved by him as they were. So that, as St. Paul tells us, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; but all are one in Christ Jesus*; Gal. iii. 28. Or as St. John expresseth it in my text, *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name*.

WHICH words containing both the terms upon which our happiness depends, and likewise the greatness of that happiness, which we may have upon those terms, I shall endeavour to give you the true sense of them, as fully and plainly as a matter of such mighty consequence requires. And for that purpose shall consider,

1. WHAT it is to receive Christ.
2. WHAT it is properly to be a son of God.
3. IN what sense Christ gives those, who receive him, power to become the sons of God.
4. How great an happiness this is to them.

As for the 1st, the receiving of Christ is a phrase which the Holy Ghost is often pleased to use, whereby to signify all that is required on our parts, in order to our obtaining eternal salvation by Christ: and it imports our accepting of him upon such terms, and under such notions, as he is offered to us in the Gospel. Wherein he is declared to be both God and man, and the Mediator between both: And, as such, to be sent by his Father as a great Prophet, to reveal his will and pleasure to us; as an high Priest, to make atonement and propitiation for our sins; and as an almighty King, to rule and govern us. And when accordingly we accept of him as such, by assenting to the doctrine that he hath taught us, hoping for pardon from the sacrifice that he hath offered for us, and obeying the laws that he hath set before us; when, I say, we do all this, then we may be truly said to receive Christ. I say, when we do all this; for he that doth not all, doth nothing to any purpose. He that assents to the truth of Christ's doctrine, without relying upon the merits of his death, or doth either or both of them without observing his commands, doth not wholly accept of him as he is propounded to us, and therefore can receive no benefit or advantage from him.

BUT this being the great thing upon which the main stress of our salvation depends, the apostle himself is pleased to explain it further thus, saying, *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name*. For altho, as we shall see more presently, there be something particular in these last words, which makes our receiving of Christ, and our believing in him, to be two several things in the notion; yet it is plain from hence, that in practice, all that believe in Christ, do likewise receive him; and all that receive him, do likewise believe in him: Yea, so that in order to our right receiving of him, it is necessary that we first believe in his name; that is, in the first place, that we be fully persuaded in our minds of the truth and certainty of all those great things that are recorded or asserted of him in the holy scriptures.

As that he is the only-begotten Son of God, of the same substance and glory with the Father from all eternity: That in the fulness of time he became man too, of the same nature and substance with us, so as to be both God and man in one person: That having thus taken our nature upon him, he died in it upon the cross, and so offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, in whose nature he

died: That as he was delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification: That being thus raised from the dead, he afterwards went up into heaven, where he hath been ever since; and is there now standing at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named in heaven and earth, and vested with absolute authority and dominion over the whole creation: That he is there *exalted by the right hand of God to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins*; Acts v. 31. That *he is therefore able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*; Heb. vii. 25. And therefore that all things relating to our salvation are now wholly in his power, and at his disposal, so that he can bestow them upon us when he pleaseth. He can save us from the dominion and tyranny of sin, and erect his kingdom of grace in our hearts. He can mortify all our lusts, and quicken us with newness of life: He can give us that repentance which is necessary to our pardon, and he can give us a pardon for all our offences, when we have so repented of them. He can reconcile God to us, and us to God, and so restore us to his love and favour again: He can protect us by his power, assist us by his grace, conduct us by his spirit, guide us by his counsel, and then receive us into glory: In short, he can do every thing for us, that is necessary to make us holy and happy. As St. Paul found by experience, when he said, *I can do all things thro Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13.

Now he whose mind is filled with a firm belief and persuasion of these great truths, so plainly revealed in scripture, cannot but trust and rely on Jesus Christ, as for his everlasting happiness and salvation in general, so for all and every thing required in order to it, and therefore promised together with it. And seeing it is evident from the whole tenour of the gospel, that no man can be saved, except he be first sanctified or made holy; that is the first and great thing we ought to believe and trust in Christ for.

AND here I cannot but take notice of a very great and dangerous mistake that people generally are apt to fall into, by relying upon Christ for pardon and salvation, whether they be qualified for it or no. Howsoever they live, they hope, when they die, Christ will receive them to himself: and that is all they hope for from him: As if Christ came to earth for no other end, but to carry men to heaven, as it was *per saltum*, without ever using the means, performing the conditions, or attaining those qualifications which are necessary in order to it. Whereas the great end of his coming into the world, was to destroy the works of the devil, to save us from our sins and purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And therefore this is the great thing we ought to expect from him, and to depend upon him for, even such a measure of his grace and holy Spirit, whereby we may be enabled to turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, so as to love, and fear, and serve him sincerely, and do all such good works as he hath prepared for us to walk in. And then, and not till then, we may and ought to trust on him for the pardon of our sins, we being now made such persons, and having performed those conditions, to which God for his sake hath promised it. And then we cannot fail of eternal happiness and salvation; for that will follow in course, upon our being thus disposed and fitted for it, and received into the grace and favour of Almighty God, in which it chiefly consists. But that we may be better assured of it, the Holy Ghost himself here tells us, that *all who thus receive Christ, and believe in his name, have power given them to become the sons of God*.

BUT what it is properly to be the sons of God, is the next thing to be consider'd. And we need not go far for the understanding of it, having it explained in the words following my text; where these sons of God are said to be *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*; that is, they are the sons of God, not in a carnal but spiritual sense: Not as they were born of their natural parents, but as being born again of God himself: born, not properly begotten; for that is peculiar to Christ, who is therefore called, the only begotten of the Father, and is never said to be born, but only begotten of him. Whereas others are said to be born of him, not by eternal generation, as Christ was, and none but he ever was, or can be, from the essence of his Father, but by spiritual regeneration, thro the mighty power and efficacy of the Holy Ghost, renewing the spirit of their minds, and so infusing into them a principle of new life, whereby they become new creatures, and have the image of God enstamped

ped again upon them, so as to be partakers of his divine nature, and holy in their capacities, as he is holy. And seeing all this is done only by the Holy Spirit of God, and seeing that Holy Spirit which doth it, is truly God himself; hence they are properly said to be born of God, and to be *born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God*, 1 Pet. i. 23. and to be born of the Holy Ghost or Spirit of God, John iii. 5. which is therefore called the *Spirit of adoption*, Rom. viii. 15. because by it they are adopted into the family of God, and made his children; according to that *Roman law*, which the apostle, speaking of adoption, seems to have respect to, *Filios familias non solum natura, verum & adoptiones faciunt*, Hor. l. i. de adopt. Not only nature, but likewise adoption, makes sons of families. And by the same law, they who are adopted into a family, have the same rights and privileges as if they were born in lawful wedlock, and are looked upon in the eye of the laws as children of that family. And so it is here. Altho' all the world be God's, he hath a peculiar people in it, which St. Paul calls *The household of God*, Eph. ii. 19. consisting of persons regenerate by his Holy Spirit, and devoted wholly to his service. And it is the particular property of this family, or household, that all the servants in it are adopted also to be children: And so they are properly the sons of God, both by grace and adoption; by grace, as they are born again of the Spirit of God; and by adoption, as they are admitted into his household and family, to partake of all the privileges of children in it.

AND all this must be ascribed wholly unto Christ: For it is he who gives this power to become the sons of God, to those who receive him; it is he that gives them that holy Spirit, whereby they are regenerate and born of God; as we learn from the apostle, saying, *That the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost is shed on us abundantly, thro Jesus Christ*, Tit. iii. 5, 6. And elsewhere the same apostle tells us, that God hath *predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself*, Eph. i. 5. And that *in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*, Gal. iv. 4, 5. Where the apostle seems again to have respect to the ancient laws and customs about adoptions, whereby a slave being adopted into a free family, was of course made free himself. So here naturally we are all slaves, and subject to all the curses in the law; but Christ being made a curse for us, hath redeemed and made us free, by adopting us into the greatest family in the world, where we enjoy *the glorious liberty of the children of God*, Rom. viii. 21.

BUT here we must observe the condition upon which Christ gives those who received this power or privilege to become the sons of God, even because they believe in his name; for so the words in the original plainly import, and may be thus rendered; *But as many as received him, to them, as believe in his name, he gave power to become the sons of God*. So that it is upon the account of their believing in him, that he is pleased to confer this honour upon them. And so indeed by the gospel tenure, all our right and title to the great blessings which Christ hath purchased for mankind, is founded upon our believing in him. It is by that our sins are pardon'd, our persons justified, and our souls saved: For Christ himself saith, that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. *And he that believeth in him is not condemned, but he that believeth not, is condemned already*, ver. 18. And so particularly our being regenerate, or made the sons of God, that, as I have observed, is wrought in us, and for us, by the Spirit of God; but that is given only to those who believe in Christ: *He that believeth on me, saith our Saviour, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*. This, saith St. John, *he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive*, John vii. 38, 39. And St. Paul, speaking to the Ephesians concerning Christ, saith, *In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*, Eph. i. 13. By all which it appears, that the Holy Spirit of God, is given to none but those which believe, and to all that do so, and therefore also because they do so. Hence it is, that, as St. John expressly tells, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*, 1 John v. 1. because by his believing in Jesus Christ, he receives the Spirit of God, whereby he is regenerate, and born again of him. And to the same purpose St. Paul saith, *Ye are all the children of God, by Faith in Jesus Christ*, Gal. iii. 26. From whence it is manifest, that

as we are made the children of God only by Christ, we are made so by him, only upon our believing in him.

NOT as if there was any such virtue or merit in our believing on him, whereby we could deserve so great a blessing at his hands, for it is still his gift; it is he that gives those who believe in him power to become the sons of God: But because he hath made this the terms or condition on our parts, upon which he will bestow this privilege upon us; and certainly it is the easiest that he could ever make, we having all the reason in the world to believe and trust on him, whom we cannot but acknowledge to be both willing and able to make good whatsoever he hath said or promised: And yet if we do that, he will unite us to himself, make us members of his own mystical body, and so partakers of that Holy Spirit which proceeds from him our head; whereby we shall be regenerate, and made the sons of God, in him, and by him who is substantially and eternally so: Insomuch, that in and thro him, we shall have as really, tho not as essentially as he hath, Almighty God himself, his Father, to be ours to; and may as truly call him our Father, for he himself doth so, saying to *Mary Magdalen, Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God,* John xx. 17.

How great an happiness that is, is the next thing I promise to consider: To consider, I say, not to explain; for that is impossible. It is impossible for the tongue of men or angels fully to explain and set forth the greatness of their happiness, who have Almighty God himself to be their Father; which is so great, so exceeding great, that it is matter of wonder and amazement, rather than of discourse and argument. St. John himself, when inspired with the Holy Ghost, could not but admire the infinite love of God to mankind upon this account: *Behold, saith he, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God,* 1 John iii. 1. It is a gift worthy both of the Father and Son's bestowing; for as the Father is here said to bestow it, so in my text the Son is said to give it: So that both the Father and the Son concur in it, yea and the Holy Ghost too; for it is by him, as I have shewn, that it is effected: And what an happiness must that needs be, which God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are pleased jointly to confer upon us? Far greater certainly than can be expressed by any words in any language whatsoever. However, I shall endeavour to give you what light I can into it, that you may see something of it, at least so much as to make you in love with it, and long to partake of it.

FIRST, therefore, it must needs be acknowledged to be an high honour to be so nearly related to the most High God. When *Saul's* servants were communing with *David* about his marrying the king's daughter, *What, saith David, seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?* 1 Sam. xviii. 23. So say I; seemeth it a light thing? Nay, is it not the greatest honour imaginable to be a son or daughter to the King of all kings, the supreme universal Monarch of the world? Yet this honour have all the saints, all that receive and believe in Christ. God doth not only look upon them as his people, his peculiar people, his heritage, his treasure, his jewels, and the like, but he admits them into the nearest relation that can be to himself; he adopts and makes them his own children, and often calls them by that most honourable name: Most honourable, I say, as being nearest to the only fountain of all true honour in the world; as a king's children are always next in honour to himself. But why do I speak here of that which is called honour among men? which, howsoever necessary to keep up order in human societies, is not worthy to be named together with that which Almighty God is pleased to confer upon those who serve and honour him, by making and calling them his own children; which is such a title of honour, as doth not only affect their fancies, but refresheth and delighteth their very souls; it being matter of real and substantial joy to be thus highly honoured by God himself: And therefore how happy must they needs be, who have obtained this grant from Christ, to become the sons of God?

AND besides, are they become the sons of God? then they are nearly related, as to God the Father, so to God the Son too; for they have the same Father with him, and so are his brethren. And indeed he doth not disdain to call them so, in the place before quoted, saying, *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.* Where he likewise intimates the reason wherefore he calls them brethren, even because his Father is their Father too; he and they are

are all of one: *For which cause, as the apostle speaks, he is not ashamed to call them brethren; Heb. ii. 11. only being begotten from eternity he is the eldest Son, and therefore called, The first-born among many brethren; Rom. viii. 29.* But tho they be younger, they are still the children of the same Father, and born again of the same Spirit by which he was conceived; and so are truly and properly his brethren, as he himself is pleased to own; as he well may: for it is he that makes them so, by giving them power to become the sons of the same God with himself.

Now what a mighty happiness is this? To be so nearly allied to the eternal Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, the greatest favourite in the court of heaven, the most powerful master of requests, the only mediator between God and men, the almighty governor of the world, the only saviour and redeemer of mankind, the supreme bishop and pastor of our souls, the true head of the church, the judge of quick and dead. To have him to be our friend, yea our brother, is such an happiness, as contains all things under it that can possibly conduce to make us happy. For what can they want who have such a brother as this? who is always both able and willing to shew them all the kindness that one brother can do another; yea, infinitely more than any but himself can shew.

AND yet this is not all neither: for having God the Father, and God the Son, to be their Father and their Brother, they cannot but have God the holy Ghost, that proceeds from both, to be always with them. It is by him they are made the sons of God, and its by him they are preserved in that relation to him, and made sensible of it; *For the Spirit it self beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God; Rom. viii. 16.* By which means they not only have almighty God for their Father, but they are able to look upon him as their Father, and to call him so, having received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father;* as the apostle speaks, *Rom. viii. 15.* And elsewhere, *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father; Gal. iv. 6.* And hence it is, that wheresoever they are, the holy Spirit of God is always with them, to keep them from temptations, to prevent sin, to enlighten their minds, to inform their judgments, to rectify their wills, to regulate their passions, to direct their intentions, to strengthen their resolutions, to support and comfort them in all conditions, to suggest good thoughts into them, to put them in mind of their duty, to excite and assist them in the practice of it, to help their infirmities, to lead them into all truth and goodness, and to keep them firm and stedfast in it, and so to sanctify them wholly in soul, body, and spirit, that they may not only be, but live as becomes the sons of God; which is such an happiness, that no tongue is able to express, nor heart is able to conceive the greatness of it.

AND therefore I must here crave leave to stand still and wonder; wonder, I say, at the heighth, the depth, the length, the breadth of the infinite love of God to mankind; that he who inhabiteth eternity, whose glory the heaven of heavens is not able to contain, should receive us vile dust and ashes, his own unworthy creatures, to be his own children; that he should send his only-begotten Son to die for us, and his own holy Spirit to live within us; that all the three Persons of the most blessed Trinity should thus agree and concur to make men happy. *Lord! what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him; or the Son of man that thou so regardest him?*

BUT what do I mean to begin to wonder at that now, which we can never wonder at enough? It being so great and amazing, that should I dwell any longer upon it, my mind would be confounded, and I should not be able to proceed any farther in describing the happiness of the sons of God. But it is no great matter whether I do or no; all that can be said more, being nothing in comparison of what hath been said already, and nothing but what necessarily proceeds from it: For to have God the Father to be our Father, God the Son to be our brother, God the Holy Ghost to be our sanctifier, our director and comforter, is to have all, and infinitely more than we can desire. Howsoever, it may not be amiss to touch upon some of those many blessings which necessarily follow upon this relation to God; which tho they do not augment, yet they demonstrate and evidence the happiness of those who are admitted to it: As, that they have free access, upon all occasions, to the almighty Governour of the world, not as to a cruel master, a severe judge, an implacable enemy, nor as to a mere stranger, but as to a most gracious, most loving, and tender Father, who loves to see his children about him, that he may give them his blessing, and manifest his fatherly care and affection to them, by granting all the good

things they desire of him. Indeed he never minds the prayers of any but his own children; and therefore our Saviour hath taught us to pray to him, only as to *Our Father which is in heaven*; and told us, that if we pray to our *Father which is in secret*, our *Father, which seeth in secret*, will reward us openly: Mat. vi. 6, 9. Whereby he gives us to understand, that we have no ground to expect any thing from God, but only as he is our Father; but that as such we may be confident he will hear, accept, and answer our prayers for his sake: *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, saith he, in my name, he will give it you*; John xvi. 23. From whence we may infallibly conclude, that the children of God can ask nothing of him, as their Father, in Christ's name, but if he knows it to be really good for them, he will certainly grant it; I say, if he knows it to be really good for them, for they may some time, thro ignorance or mistake, ask that which would do them harm; and if they knew that as well as he, they would desire rather not to have it: in which case he grants their desires, by not answering their prayers: But whatsoever they ask, which he in his infinite wisdom and goodness knows will do them good, they are sure to have it.

FOR indeed he is so far from denying them any thing that is good for them that he makes all things work together for their good: *We know*, saith the apostle, *that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose*; as before all his children are, Rom. viii. 28. And they surely must needs be happy, whom all things conspire to make so; as they do for those who have the maker and governour of all things for their Father; who so orders and disposeth of all things for the benefit of his children, that whatsoever happens they are certain one time or other to be gainers by it. There is never a shower but what produceth them some fruits; never a wind but blows them some good or other; nor the most accidental thing that is, but what falls out well for them: The stars in their courses fight against their enemies, and whatsoever position the planets are in, the ascendant is always on their side. The malice of their enemies is really a kindness to them, and all their strivings and contentions with them, strive and contend together which should be best for them. The holy angels of heaven minister unto them, and so do the fiends of hell, tho sore against their will; all their temptations tending to their increase in faith and virtue: if they are becalmed, it is to prevent their falling upon rocks or quicksands; and all the storms they meet with, carry them directly to their harbour; and so every circumstance of their life helps either to do or make them good: riches enable them to be charitable to the poor: poverty makes them rich in faith: honour makes them cautious: disgrace patient; cheerfulness active; melancholy humble: health makes them useful and serviceable in their generation: sickness brings them nearer unto God: life prepares them for death; and death carries them home to their Father's house, to live with him for ever: so that whatsoever happens to them, they are always sure to be some way or other the better for it; altho they themselves may not see it at present, at least not so clearly as they will when they come to heaven; where, by the light of their Father's countenance shining upon them, they will be able to look back and behold his infinite goodness and mercy in all and every one of his dealings with them thro the whole course of their lives; how well it was for them that they lived in such a place, were of such a calling, had such relations or acquaintance, such an estate, such losses or troubles as they had; and that if any thing had fallen out otherwise than it did, it would have been much worse for them.

AND verily it is no wonder, that all things conduce to the good of those who are the sons of God, upon that very account, because they are the sons of God, of him who governs and orders all things, and cannot but be supposed to have a particular care of his own children in it so as to dispose of them, and every thing relating to them as will be most for their advantage. For which purpose, from the first moment of their new birth, he takes them into his protection; he supplies them with all things necessary both for life and godliness; he feeds them at first with milk, and afterwards with stronger meats; he settles them in such a place, where they shall have all the means of grace and salvation; he puts them out to such a calling, as he knows to be most suitable to their temper and disposition; he brings them into such relations and acquaintance, as all things considered, will be most helpful to them; he chastiseth and corrects them when they do amiss, to make them take more heed for the future; he smiles upon them, and manifesteth his fatherly kindness to them when they stand in need of it, for their comfort and encouragement in doing well; he allows them as much of the blessings of this life, as he knows will do them good, and

no more, lest they should be injured by them; he measures out the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit to them, according to their several capacities and occasions; he always keeps a strict hand over them, and takes care that they shall never have any thing that will do them hurt, nor want any thing that will do them good: and so he carries them thro all the changes and chances of this mortal life, till at length he brings them to that inheritance which he hath provided for them in the other world.

I SAY, to that inheritance; for this is the great privilege of the sons of God, that they are all Heirs; as St. Paul assures them, saying to every one of them, *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ*; Gal. iv. 6. And elsewhere he saith, *The Spirit it self beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*; Rom. viii. 16, 17. They are all heirs, and they are all heirs of God, and all joint-heirs with Christ; not properly with one another; for if they were joint, or co-heirs with one another, they must share the inheritance between them, every one taking his only proportion; whereas the inheritance of the sons of God is never divided. But though, as we shall see presently, it is very large; yet it always goes together, so that every one enjoys it wholly to himself, as much as if he was the sole heir, and none had a right or title to it but himself. They are all, and every one joint-heirs with Christ, being joined with him in the full possession and enjoyment of all that he himself is heir to; which certainly is very much, no less than all things that are: For so the apostle tells us, that *Christ is appointed heir of all things*, Heb. i. 2. and so are all the sons of God with him, and by him. All things are settled upon every one of them, as his proper inheritance, and that by their Father himself; saying, *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son*; Rev. xxi. 7. Where we may observe he speaks in a singular number, and so not of all in general, but of every one singly by himself, to shew that every one singly shall inherit all things; and then adds the reason of it; saying, *I will be his God, and he shall be my son. He shall be my son*; that's the reason he is an heir: *I will be his God*; that is the reason he inherits all things. For he that hath God to be his God, cannot but have all things, all things being made by him, and subsisting continually in him. And therefore whatsoever comfort, pleasure, or happiness any creature in the whole world can afford mankind in their most perfect state, that every one of the sons of God doth fully, perfectly, and eternally enjoy in heaven, which is therefore called their inheritance; because it is there that they possess and enjoy all things: And not only all things that God hath made, but himself too that made them; even all those infinite perfections which are concentrated in his divine essence, so far as finite creatures can be made capable of enjoying them, and so are as happy as it is possible for creatures to be.

THIS is that which St. Paul calls, *The inheritance of the saints in light*; Col. i. 12. St. Peter, *An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them*; 1 Pet. i. 4. Our blessed Saviour calls it, *The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God*; and in a super-eminent manner, *the kingdom*; saying, *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*; Luke xii. 32. It being such a kingdom, in comparison whereof no other place deserves to be called by that name: A kingdom, where the subjects are all kings, and every one exceeds all the princes and emperors upon earth in real wealth and honour, far more than they do the meanest and most despicable vassal: A kingdom, where there are never any wars, or rumours of wars; no discord or emulation, no strife or contention, no disorder or confusion; but all righteousness, and love, and joy, and peace, and happiness, as much as every one's soul can hold: A kingdom, where all enjoy every thing, and every one all things they can desire. This is that kingdom which they inherit and enjoy for ever; to whom Christ gives power to *become the sons of God*, and which he himself will give them possession of at the last day; saying, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*; Mat. xxv. 34.

AND if so, who would not be a son of God? And who may not, if he will? If the sons of God be all so truly and substantially happy, as I have shewn, and be sure they are both in this world and the next; what mean we to desire or seek any thing else, but to get into the number of them? Whatsoever else we seek, we are not sure to attain it; and if we attain it, we are sure to be never the better for it, nor happier by it: whereas by this means we may attain all the happiness we can desire, and more than we are able to conceive; there being no sort of happiness that man-

kind is capable of, but all the sons of God have it, and none but they; all others being altogether strangers to it, and ignorant of what the word *happiness* means, as having no true sense or experience of it. So that as ever we desire to know what it is to be happy, we must become the sons of God. And blessed be God for it, we are all as yet capable of being made so by Christ, who gives this power to as many as receive and believe in him. Where we see there is no exception made against any person whatsoever, nor by consequence against any of us: But as many of us as shall so receive him, as by a quick and lively faith to receive grace and virtue from him to repent and turn to God, to all such amongst us the eternal Son of God himself will give power to become, according to our capacity, like himself, the sons of God too. For which purpose it will be necessary to be constant and sincere in the use of all such means as he hath appointed, whereby to beget faith, and all other graces in us, that so we may be admitted into this glorious fraternity, the household of God, the communion of saints, the most, the only happy society we can be of.

AND if there be any here present, as I hope there are many, who have already received this power from Christ, to *become the children of God*; what cause have you to praise, adore, and magnify your heavenly Father for so great a favour, so high an honour, so inestimable a blessing as this is? How can you ever render him suitable or sufficient thanks for it? No way, certainly; that is impossible, and therefore he doth not expect it from you. All that he expects and requires, is, that you live with a constant sense and acknowledgment of his mercy to you, and as becometh those who are so nearly related to himself; that you live like yourselves, the children of the most High God, and heirs apparent to the crown of glory; that you live above this world, and have your conversation in heaven, where your inheritance and estate lies; that you be patient, submissive, and thankful for every thing that befalls you, as knowing it to come from your heavenly Father; that you do not covet the little things of this world, seeing all things in the whole world are yours already; and it is not long but you will be put into the actual possession of them: That you carry your selves as *obedient children, not fashioning your selves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation*; 1 Pet. i. 14, 15. That you be *merciful as your Father is merciful, and perfect as he is perfect*; Luke vi. 36. Mat. v. 48. That you be tender of his honour, constant in his service, and observant of all his commands, and study all you can to please him: *That ye be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom shine ye as lights in the world*; Phil. ii. 15. In short, *that your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*; Mat. v. 16. By this means you will carry your selves as become the sons of God, and so continue always in his love and favour while you are upon earth; and when you go from hence, you will be admitted to that inheritance which Christ hath purchased, and is now preparing for you in the highest heavens, where you will live with this your almighty and most merciful Father, and so be happy for ever, thro the same our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: *To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and for ever. Amen.*



S E R M O N LXXXII.

The profession of faith in Christ ought to be publick.

MAT. X. 32, 33.

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven:
But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

WHEN our ever-blessed Saviour sent forth his apostles to propagate the gospel which he had planted, he did not only give them instructions how to do it, but he forewarned them also of the troubles and difficulties they should meet with in it, and how they should carry and behave themselves under it. He told them, that he sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; ver. 16. that they should be delivered up to councils, and scourged in their synagogues; that they should be brought before governors and kings, and be hated of all men for his name's sake; ver. 17, 18, 22. But lest they should be discouraged, he told them withal, that they need not be solicitous or thoughtful what to say when they should be delivered up, for that the Spirit of God should direct them what to say, and he should speak in them, ver. 20. Neither should they wonder if they, his servants and disciples, should be reproached and persecuted, seeing he himself their Lord and Master, was so before them; ver. 24, 25. He assured them, that they should publickly preach what he taught them privately, so that his gospel should be made known unto the world, in spite of all the opposition that could be made against it; ver. 26, 27. And therefore he bad them go on with courage and resolution, not fearing those who can kill the body only, but him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell; ver. 28. and who doth not only uphold and govern the world in general, but orders and disposeth of every particular thing that is in it, from the greatest to the least; insomuch that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without him, and the very hairs of their heads are all numbered by him; ver. 29, 30. How much more will he take care of them whom he values more than many sparrows? ver. 31. especially while they are doing the work he sends them about, he'll suffer nothing to befall them but what shall be both for his glory and their good; which that they might not doubt of, nor wonder how it should come to pass that Almighty God should have such a particular care of them more than of other people, he gives them the reason of it in my text, but expresseth it in such general terms, that it might serve as a standing rule to be observed, not only by his apostles upon that occasion, but by all his faithful people in all ages; saying to every one, *Whosoever he be that shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven:* And on the contrary, *Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

IN which words our great Master hath taught us two lessons necessary for all his disciples to learn. First, how they may obtain and always continue in the special favour of God the Father, even by their confessing him before men: And, secondly, how God the Father comes to have such a special favour for them who confess him before men, even because he confesseth them before the Father.

THEY who know God to be the supreme governor and disposer of all things in the world, cannot but desire his love and favour before all things in it; because without that nothing in the world can do them good: Whereas, if he who governs all things be their friend, all things else must needs be so. But how can sinful men, who have so highly provoked and incensed him against them, by not observing his commands, nor answering his end in making them; how can they ever expect that he should be reconciled to them, and become their friend? No way certainly, but by some mediator between him and them, who can appease the wrath which he hath so justly conceived against them, and so reconcile him to them. But there is but *one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. And this Christ Jesus hath here told us what we must do for him, that he may stand our friend, and mediate between God and us. We must confess him before men; and therefore it highly concerns us to understand how we may do that, or what he means by our confessing him before men.

So far as opposites mutually illustrate each other, we may understand something of what it is to confess Christ, by its being opposed here to our denying him, and elsewhere to our being ashamed of him and his words, *Mark viii. 38*. For this shews, that they who deny Christ, or are ashamed of him and his words, are so far from confessing Christ, that they act just contrary to it. But to understand more fully what it is properly to confess Christ before men, we must take notice that there are three things necessarily required to it.

First, IT is necessary that we heartily believe all that is revealed concerning Jesus Christ in the holy scriptures: For it is *with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness*, before he can make confession of it with his *mouth unto salvation*, Rom. x. 10. He therefore that would confess Christ before men, must not only not contradict or deny any thing that is recorded to be done or said by him, or of him; but must be fully persuaded in his mind of the truth and certainty of it, as he can be of any thing in the world, so as to make no question or doubt at all of it: As, that he is the only-begotten Son of God: That he and the Father are one, so that he is over all, God blessed for ever: That in time he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin *Mary*, so as to become likewise really and truly man: That, as such, he lived several years upon earth, wrought many miracles, revealed many great truths, and at last died for our sins; then rose again for our justification, and went up to heaven, and is now there the only mediator between God and men; and at the last day shall come to earth again, to judge both the quick and dead. These are the fundamental articles of the christian religion, upon which our faith and hope is built; and therefore the grand deceiver of mankind hath all along done what he could to keep men off from believing and confessing of them: especially those two, upon which the rest are grounded, the divinity of Christ, and his incarnation. The denying or confessing of which, St. *John* lays down as the rule whereby to distinguish between the Spirit of God, and spirit of antichrist; *Hereby, saith he, know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already it is in the world*, 1 John iv. 2, 3. From whence it seems this wicked spirit began even in the apostles days to work in the world: And that many were deceived by it, the same apostle acquaints us, saying, *Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: This is a deceiver and an antichrist*, 2 John ver. 7. And as the apostles took notice of these deceivers in their days, so they foretold there would be such in future ages. As where St. *Peter*, writing to all christians, having first acquainted them how the true prophets were inspired and moved by the Holy Ghost, he presently adds, *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction*, 2 Pet. ii. 1.

THIS

THIS prophecy was never more plainly fulfilled than in our days, when there are so many false teachers, which bring in such damnable heresies, that they subvert whole houses, and turn them quite off from Christ and the gospel, owning no other Christ, but what they pretend to be within them; and so denying his birth and incarnation, his death and passion for us, his resurrection, ascension, and intercession for us at the right hand of God: and therefore have laid aside the sacraments which he hath ordained, and apostatiz'd so far from his religion, that they do not so much as profess it, nor regard his holy gospel so much as the extravagant writings of their own ignorant impostors. I heartily pity such among them as are led blindfold they know not whither; and hope that God, of his infinite mercy, may open their eyes before it be too late: But as for their leaders, upon them is verified what the apostle long ago foretold, *Because they received not the truth in the love of it; for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they shall believe a lye,* 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11.

WHEREFORE, in the name of Christ, I advise and beseech all here present, to carry that caution which he hath given you, always in your minds; *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves,* Mat. vii. 15. And accordingly, notwithstanding their fair speeches and plausible pretences, as ye tender your own eternal welfare, beware of this sort of people, and all such as deny the divine inspiration of the holy scriptures; or the divinity of our blessed Saviour, or the satisfaction he hath made for our sins: For all such plainly deny Christ before men: and he hath told them with his own mouth, that he will deny them *before his Father, which is in heaven:* and then, wo be to them! But do ye still go on, as ye have begun, *to hold fast the form of sound words;* keep close to the doctrine of the gospel, and live with a steadfast belief of what Christ hath there revealed to you, that ye may be able to confess him before men, so as to have him to confess you before God.

BUT to your confessing of Christ aright, it is not enough that you thus believe all that he hath taught, but you must make open profession of it to the world: For it is *with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation,* Rom. x. 10. With the mouth, by testifying and declaring upon all occasions, that Jesus Christ is your God and Saviour, the only Saviour ye have in all the world: That there is no salvation in any other, but that *he is able to save them to the utmost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,* Heb. vii. 25. This you must stick to and maintain with all your might, against such as have the impudence to blaspheme his name, oppose his power, or contradict the doctrine that he hath deliver'd to you; without ever receding from it, or so much as concealing it out of fear or favour of any man living: No, not tho it should cost you all ye have, your liberty, your estates, or your very lives; which ye can never lay down with so much comfort and advantage to your selves, as for his sake, who laid down his own life to redeem yours.

THUS it was that the apostles, first disciples, and many of the primitive christians, confessed Christ before men, when it was death to do so. But that was nothing to them, who chose rather to suffer the most barbarous and cruel death that the malice of men or devils could invent, rather than do any thing whereby they might seem to deny him, or their relation to him; and therefore were called his martyrs, that is, his witnesses, because they attested his divine power and glory, his infinite love to mankind, and their obligations to serve and honour him, and so gave publick testimony to the truth of the whole gospel, sealing it with their own blood. These were said to receive the crown of martyrdom: but such as suffered only the spoiling of their goods, stripes or wounds in their bodies, reproaches, imprisonment, or any sort of trouble on this side death, for the sake of Christ, they were called confessors; because they confessed him before men, by declaring and shewing publickly that they preferred his honour and love before all things in the world. And altho their sufferings might seem very grievous to other people; yet to themselves they afforded matter of joy and comfort: They rejoiced, *that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name,* Acts v. 41. and took joyfully *the spoiling of their goods,* Heb. x. 34. And therefore they looked upon all the persecutions which they underwent for Christ's sake, not as judgments or afflictions, but as the tokens of God's special love and favour to them. *To you it is given,* saith St. Paul, *in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,* Phil. i. 29.

AND thus therefore it is that we are all bound to confess Christ before men upon all occasions, whensoever we be so happy as to be called to it, so as chearfully to undergo any trouble that may befall us for it, and so give him the honour due unto his name: This being the only way whereby it is possible for us to render him our thanks and praise for his infinite love and goodness to us. And therefore confessing and praising him, in the sacred language, is one and the same thing; for we cannot add any thing to his essential glory: all that we can do is only to confess and acknowledge publickly what great things he hath done for us. And this he is pleased to accept of, as our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for all his mercies vouchsafed to us; and to promise, that if we thus *confess him before men*, he will confess us *before his Father which is in heaven*.

BUT for that purpose, we must confess him, not only with our lips, but in our lives, in deed as well as word; by giving up ourselves to his service; and doing the business that he hath set us, and so demonstrating to the world, that we own him for our Lord and Master. The apostle speaks of some in his days who professed, *that they knew God, but in works they denied him, being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16. There were some then, but now there are many such, who confess Christ with their mouths, but deny him in their lives and actions; by breaking his laws, and neglecting the works that he hath required of them: Whatsoever such people may pretend, Christ will never own them for his confessors: Let us hear what he himself saith: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many, saith he, will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* How confident will these men be that they had confessed Christ? But will he confess them? So far from that, that *he will profess unto them, that he never knew them*; and therefore will say unto them, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*, Mat. vii. 21, 22, 23. If they wrought iniquity, if they lived in sin, and the transgression of his laws, notwithstanding all their outward professions, he will never own them, but reject and cast them off as hypocrites and unbelievers.

WHEREFORE, as ever ye desire to be in the number of those who confess Christ before men, ye must take special heed to do whatsoever he hath commanded; and therefore to do it because he hath commanded it, that so ye may acknowledge him in it. More particularly, ye must take all occasions that ye can get, of waiting upon him in his own house; to know his pleasure, and to perform your publick devotions to him, and to the Father in his name. They who do not this, are so far from confessing Christ, that they rather deny him, by denying him the homage and service which they owe him; and therefore can expect no other but that he, according to his word, will deny them before his Father: Whereas they who take all opportunities that they can get, of attending upon him, and making their solemn addresses to him, to pray unto him for what they want, and praise him for what they have, they openly confess him before men: especially if they likewise thankfully accept of all the gracious invitations which he is pleased to make them, of feeding upon his most blessed body and blood. They who refuse so great a favour, when he is pleased to offer it to them, in effect deny him; and yet this is the case of too many among us. Tho he hath so expressly commanded all to receive the sacrament of his last supper in remembrance of him, yet many that are called by his name, will not do it: Some out of ignorance, some out of carelessness, some out of fear; and, which one would wonder at, some out of shame, being ashamed to seem religious, or to confess Christ too much. Such may be confident that they do not confess him at all; and that, as they are ashamed of him now, he will be ashamed of them at the last day. But they who constantly celebrate the memory of that death which he hath suffered for them, they constantly confess him before men, and therefore have his word for it, that he *will confess them before his Father which is in heaven*.

THIS, which our Lord and Master here requires us to do, how much soever we may suffer for doing it, may at first sight seem to be very much; but it is nothing in comparison of what he promises to them who do it. He requires only mortal and sinful men to confess him; but he promiseth that he, the holy and immortal God, will confess them. He requires them to confess him only before men upon earth, but he promiseth that he will confess them before his Father in heaven. And how great a favour that is, how happy they are who have the only begotten Son of God

to confefs before the Father is paſt my ſkill fully to deſcribe. But that I may give you what light I can into it, ſuch as may excite your deſires and endeavours after it, will be neceſſary to prepare the way by premifing ſome ſuch conſiderations, as being laid together, may make it plain and eaſy.

1. WHEN our firſt parents fell, all mankind being then in their loins, fell together with them under the diſpleaſure of Almighty God their Maker. They are all by nature the children of wrath, one as well as another; for they are all corrupted and depraved in all their faculties to that degree, that every imagination of the thoughts of every man's heart is only evil continually. There is none that doth good, no not one, from the firſt man that was made, to the laſt that ſhall be born into the world. And being all thus fallen from their firſt eſtate, wherein they were created, and ſo having, as much as in them lay, fruſtrated the end of their creation, their Almighty Creator is juſtly offended with them, and hath condemned them all to the death which he at firſt threatened in that caſe: Whereby it is come to paſs, that all men, in all ages, from the beginning to the end of the world, are continually ſubject to the wrath of God, and by conſequence to all the miſery and trouble that they are able to bear, both in this life and the next.

2. THIS being the caſe of all men by the fall of the firſt *Adam*, their Almighty Creator, to ſhew forth his mercy and truth, was pleaſed immediately to ſet up another *Adam*, by whom they might riſe again to their firſt eſtate, even his only-begotten Son; who taking upon him the whole nature of man, and ſo becoming another *Adam*, or man in general, he in that nature might fulfil the word, and ſatisfy the juſtice of God, by ſuffering the death which he had threatened to the firſt, and in him to all mankind; and by virtue of his ſaid death, might be the mediator between God and men; as he therefore hath been from the beginning, is now, and ever will be to the end of the world. And it is by means of this his mediation, that God is gracious and merciful to fallen men, though not to the fallen angels: Theſe are all reſerved in everlaſting chains under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day, without any hopes of mercy, becauſe they have no mediator to obtain it for them; forasmuch as Chriſt Jeſus took not on him the nature of angels, but the ſeed of *Abraham*. But he being made in the likenes of men, and having given himſelf as a ranſom for them, and being now at the right hand of God, appearing continually in his preſence for them, God in him, and for his ſake, hath promiſed to ſhew them all the grace and favour they can deſire, and manifeſteth his truth in the performance of the ſaid promiſes: Wherefore it is written, *Grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt*; John i. 17. It came by him at firſt, and ſo it doth continually, as light and heat comes from the ſun: Inſomuch, that as without the ſun in the firmament, there would be no ſuch thing as light or heat upon the earth; ſo without the ſun of righteouſneſs ſhining continually in the higheſt heavens, the grace and truth of God had never appeared to mankind. If Chriſt was not always fitting at the right hand of God, as the mediator between him and men, no man could ever have received any particular favour or mercy from him: Whereas by means of that interceſſion, atonement and reconciliation, which he is there continually making, by virtue of the ſacrifice which he once offered upon earth, the mercies of God are over all his works, ſpread over the face of the whole earth; ſo that all men are capable of them, and may have them, if they will but apply themſelves to him as their mediator for them.

3. BUT then we muſt obſerve, in the next place, that although Chriſt, by virtue of his death, be a ſufficient propitiation for the ſins of the whole world; yet he actually applies this his propitiation to none, but ſuch as ſo apply themſelves to him, by believing and truſting upon him for it. Unleſs we ſo retain him for our advocate, we have no ground to expect that he ſhould plead our cauſe, and make interceſſion for us. He himſelf hath told us the contrary; where, ſpeaking to the Father of thoſe who believed in him, he ſaith, *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou haſt given me, for they are thine*; John xvii. 9. Which he hath left upon record to ſhew, that he prays or intercedes with the Father only for his own flock, for ſuch as by faith are united to him, and made real members of his body. And therefore it is written, that *he is able to ſave them to the utmoſt, that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them*; Heb. vii. 25. For thoſe who come unto God by him, he is always making interceſſion, though for none elſe; but for all them, and therefore ſaves them all, how many ſoever they be. If he ſhould intercede for all mankind, all mankind would certainly

certainly be saved; for the Father always hears him in whatsoever he asks: According to that remarkable saying of the Father to him, *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession*; Psal. ii. 8. And therefore the only reason why any are not saved by him, is, because they will not believe in him for it. And he intercedes for none but those who do so; but he doth it so effectually for all them, that none of them can be lost.

THESE things being premised, we may easily see both in what sense Christ here saith, *That whoso confesses him before men, he will confess them before his Father*; and likewise how great an encouragement this is for us all to confess him: For they who confess him so, as I have shewn we all ought to do before men, thereby plainly shew, that they firmly believe in him as their Saviour, their Mediator and Advocate, and accordingly trust and depend upon him and his mediation for all things requisite to their obtaining that eternal redemption, which they believe he hath purchased for them. But as we have now seen, he is always making intercession for all who thus truly believe in him.

AND this is that which he here intimates, by saying, *That he will confess them before his Father which is in heaven*. He will own them for his faithful disciples and servants; he will confess them to be of his body and family, that they belong to him as his purchase and inheritance, and accordingly is always making intercession with the Father for them.

AND how happy are all they who have the only-begotten Son of God, to confess them before his Father, and to intercede with him in their behalf? They, upon their repentance for their former sins, are perfectly absolved from them by the merits of his death, and are accounted righteous, in and through him, before Almighty God himself: They are led by his Holy Spirit into all truth and goodness, and sanctify'd throughout in soul, body, and spirit: They need fear no evil, for he gives his angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways: They can want nothing that is good for them, for all things work together for their good. Whatsoever they ask in his name, that is really for their advantage, they are sure to have it, by virtue of that most powerful intercession that he is continually making with the Father for them. All their devotions and good works, tho in themselves imperfect, are notwithstanding as acceptable and well pleasing to God thro him, as if they were as perfect as the law requires. They live under the special favour and protection of the Almighty Governor of the world, and have the light of his countenance shining continually upon them. In a word, they are altogether as happy as they can wish to be in this life, and shall be eternally happy in the next; and all because they have the eternal Son of God always confessing and acknowledging them before the Father to be his, and therefore making intercession with him that they may be saved.

WHEREAS on the other side, They who deny him before men; they who deny his divine power and glory; who deny his coming in the flesh, or his suffering for the sins of the world; who deny his resurrection, ascension, or exaltation at the right hand of God; they who deny him to be their Lord and Saviour, and therefore will not obey his laws, nor believe in him for pardon and salvation: All such as thus deny him before men, he himself saith, *That he will deny them before the Father*: He will not own them to be of his flock, nor take any care of them: He will deny them to belong to him, or to have any share or interest in his merits; and therefore will not pray or intercede with the Father to have mercy on them, but leave them to his justice, to do what he pleaseth with them.

AND then, what a miserable condition are these people in? They may perhaps abound in the things of this world, which God in his general providence scatters promiscuously among men of all sorts, good and bad: And they may, perhaps, dream of being happy in what they have. But, alas! it is but a mere dream: For whatsoever they have, is cursed to them. They have not so much as any one blessing in all the world; and how much soever they may flatter themselves with the hopes of God's mercy, they will never find it, in that they have none to intercede with him to be merciful unto them; for there is but *one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*: But him they deny, and therefore he denies them; as he himself here saith, and his apostle after him: *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: If we deny him, he also will deny us*, 2 Tim. ii. 12. And woe be to them whom he denies! They are all in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. He that made them is angry with them, and ready every moment to execute his vengeance upon them: *They being without Christ, are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*,

Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. and therefore how big soever they may look, and how busy soever they may be in the world, they are all the while *treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; Rom. ii. 5. when they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, 2 Thes. i. 9. when, as they denied him before men, he will deny them, not only before the Father, but likewise before the angels of God; Luke xii. 9. Here they were mixed with them, but then he will divide them from his sheep, and set them on his left hand before all the world; and will say unto them, *depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*; Mat. xxv. 41.

BUT those who, while they lived upon earth, had confessed him before men, as he had confessed them all along before his Father; he will at the last day *confess them also before the angels of God*, as he himself saith, Luke xii. 8. Then all the world, both angels and men, shall see the vast difference that he will make between the righteous and the wicked; between believers and infidels; between those who had confessed, and those who had denied him before men: *For these, as he himself saith, shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*; Mat. xxv. 46. As they had confessed him, he will now confess them, not only before all the men that ever were in the world, but likewise before all the angels of God, who shall be all there present to behold and admire his infinite love and kindness to them: He will confess and own them for his peculiar people, his servants, his brethren: He will confess and recount all that they had done, and all that they had suffer'd for him, while they were upon earth: And then he will separate them from all the rest of mankind, set them by themselves at his own right hand, and will say unto them, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*; Mat. xxv. 34. Where, from that time forward, they shall all shine forth, every one as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, to all eternity, chap. xiii. 43.

FOR this we have the word of God himself, and therefore may well believe it. And if we all did so, how should we strive which should confess Christ most constantly in the world? And yet how few are there that do it? How few that confess him, in comparison of the many who deny him? Some deny his divine, and some his human nature. Some deny the truth of what he said, others deny him the worship that is due unto him. There are some who were once baptized into his name; and yet afterwards renounce it, and turn *Turks, Socinians, or Heathens*: And some who deny his very institution of the sacrament of baptism, and therefore are so far from being christians themselves, that they would have no such thing as a christian in the world. And if these do not deny Christ, who can? I do not wonder, that they who forsake the light of God's word, to follow that which they fancy to be within them, should fall into such horrid opinions; much less that they who deny one sacrament, should deny the other also, which they are not capable of receiving. But I wonder most at those, who pretend to confess and own both institutions and precepts of our blessed Saviour, and yet observe neither. How many are there among us, who never received the sacrament of his last supper in all their lives? And how can such be said to confess Christ? who can tell but they have denied him? Seeing he will not do that which he hath so plainly commanded them to do in remembrance of him, and thereby to shew, that they confess him to be their Lord and Saviour. They who do not obey him in this, may be confident that they obey him in nothing, but live continually in sin or the transgression of his laws. And they who do so, how much soever they may profess him to be their Lord and Master, in their works they deny him; and say in effect, we will not have this man to rule over us.

I fear there may be many here present, who, at least in their lives and actions, have hitherto denied Christ, and will therefore be certainly denied by him, unless they take care to prevent it. But what must they do for that purpose? They must do as St. Peter did: When he denied Christ in the high priest's hall, he considering what he had done, *went out immediately, and wept bitterly*; Mat. xxvi. 75. He repented heartily for what he had done, and spent the rest of his life in the service of Christ, and at last laid it down for his sake; and so he never denied him any more, but confessed him to the last, tho it cost him his life. So must you: Ye must make it your constant business to serve and glorify him as long as ye live; and if ye be called to it, by your death too. And then you may be sure, that notwith-

standing your former denial of him he will reckon you among those who confess him before men, and whom he will therefore confess before his Father that is in heaven.

WHEREFORE, in short, as ever ye desire to find any mercy at the hands of God, thro the mediation of Jesus Christ, take care to avoid whatsoever may seem to argue any mistrust or denial of him. Take heed that ye be not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but be ye stedfast and unmoveable in confessing his holy name and religion. Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering: Let all men see that you are Christ's disciples indeed, by your adhering firmly to what he hath taught you, by your doing whatsoever he hath commanded you, by your constant attendance upon his service, and by your zeal to promote his honour and glory, whatsoever it cost you. Never fear losing any thing for him, by whom alone you can have any thing that is good for you: Remember he is now in heaven, at the right hand of God; and if you thus confess him before men, he will confess you before his Father. He will confess and acknowledge that ye appertain to him, that you are of his flock, and will therefore intercede so effectually for you, that ye shall live continually under the particular care and conduct of almighty God the Father, and under the special grace and influence of his holy Spirit. And at the last day he will confess you also before all the angels of God, and advance you to that happy state, where ye shall clearly see, how all the favours ye ever received from God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, came to you through the mediation of God the Son, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth one God, blessed for ever.



S E R M O N LXXXIII.

The profession of our Faith in Christ ought to be constant.

HEB. X. 23, 24.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering,
(for he is faithful that promised:)
And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good Works.*

THAT most glorious and almighty Being, which we worship, and call **GOD**, although he be not only infinitely above us, but of a nature quite contrary to ours; his being purity, holiness, perfection itself; ours weak, corrupt and sinful: yet so great is his love to mankind, that he himself hath found out a way, whereby we may come so near to him, as to see and enjoy him: Which is so high a mystery, that human reason, in its highest perfection, could never have reached it; neither could we ever have thought it possible, or so much as thought of it at all, if God himself had not revealed it to us in his holy word: But there we find, that *there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one*, one Lord, one God, 1 John v. 7. That the second of these three, God the Son, or Word, was made flesh, or took upon him the whole nature of man, so as to become God and man in one person; John i. 14. That this Divine Person, in that nature, lived several years upon earth, and then died for the sins of mankind, in whose nature he did it: That in the same nature he rose again from the dead, ascended up to heaven, and is there set down at the right hand of the throne of God: And, that he is there now the Mediator between God and men, having given himself a ransom for all, to make up all differences between them, and so to reconcile both God to men, and men to God: So that by him, as a middle person between both, God is pleased to condescend so low, as to manifest himself to men, and men may ascend so high as to behold and enjoy God. All which having been typified and represented in the old law by the high-priest's going with the blood of a slain beast into the most holy place where God resided, and there making atonement and reconciliation for the sins of the people: Therefore our Mediator is called also an high-priest, as doing that really and effectually, which the other did only in type and figure.

THIS is that great doctrine which the apostle teacheth in this chapter, and in my text shews us what use we ought to make of it. Having first shewn, that the law had only a shadow of good things to come, and that all the sacrifices which were there offered, could never take away sin: He adds, that *this man*, even Christ our High-priest, *after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, ver. 12, 14. Whereby he gives us to understand, that our High-priest, by the one oblation of himself once offer'd, was a complete propitiation, or hath made sufficient

ficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; so that we need no other sacrifice but that, whereby to obtain the remission of our sins, and to make reconciliation for us. Neither doth he only assert this, but he proves too from the nature of that covenant which our Mediator hath made with God for us, and sealed it with his own blood; wherein God promiseth to put his laws into our hearts and to remember our sins no more, *ver. 16, 17.* Now, saith the apostle, *where remission of these is, there is no offering for sin; ver. 18.* And if he had said, Sacrifices are offered only for the remission of sins; but by virtue of the covenant founded in the blood of Christ once offered, our sins are no more remembered, but remitted or forgiven, and therefore there is no more occasion for any other offering for them; that one having done the business as effectually to all intents and purposes, as if it had been repeated over and over again, as often as any sin was committed.

Now the apostle having thus both explained and confirmed this doctrine to us, he proceeds to shew the uses we ought to make of it. First, saith he, *Having therefore, brethren, boldness, or liberty, to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us thro the vail, that is to say, his flesh; ver. 19, 20.* Whereby he puts us in mind, that we have now free access to God, or liberty to go to the most holy place where he resideth; that we have it only by the blood of Jesus; that this is a new and living way, which Jesus himself hath made, and that he made it thro the vail, that is, his flesh. It was through the vail in the tabernacle and temple, that the high-priest always went into the most holy place; for that hanging always before it, he could not possibly go any other way. This vail, saith the apostle, was the flesh of Jesus, or his human nature: And therefore when that suffered, the vail of the temple was rent in sunder, suffering, as it were, together with it, to shew that the type was now at an end, and that the true way into the most holy place of all, was only by the blood of Christ. This the apostle calls a new way, in contradiction to the old typical way thro the vail; and not a dead or inanimate way like that, but a living way, Christ always living to make inter-
us.

HAVING therefore such a way opened, and likewise such a high-priest over the house of God, one that is made *Head over all things to the church*, Eph. i. 22. let us, saith the apostle, draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; that as he expresth it in another place, *Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need; Heb. iv. 16.* This we may and ought to do now, even to come to the throne of grace, to God's mercy-seat, with a true and sincere heart, and likewise with full assurance of faith, with such a faith as fills the soul with confidence and assurance of God's mercy and grace in Christ; especially having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, that is, cleansed from all consciousness of sin, by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon them, and having had our bodies washed with pure water in baptism, as a sign and seal of it; *Let us, saith he, hold the profession of our faith without wavering, (for he is faithful that promised:)* And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.

I HAVE given you this short explication of the context, both because of the great excellency and usefulness of the doctrine contained in it, and also because the text could not so well be understood without it: Whereas now the meaning of it plainly appears to be this in general, that seeing we have such a Mediator and High-priest, at the right hand of God, always making atonement, reconciliation, and intercession for us, by virtue of that propitiation which he hath made for the sins of the world: Therefore we, first, ought to continue always firm and stedfast in our faith, and likewise in our profession of it, as grounded upon the promise of one that is faithful: And, secondly, that we should also do all we can to excite and stir up one another to love and good works, suitable to such a profession.

FIRST, saith he, *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* Instead of faith, most Greek copies read *ἐλπίς*, *hope*; but the sense is the same: Faith when it hath respect to the promises, as it hath here, being in effect the same thing with hope. Now, in order to our holding fast the profession of our faith, it is necessary that we first hold fast our faith or hope itself without wavering; for if we let that go, we shall have none that we can truly profess. And certainly we
have

have all the reason in the world to hold fast our hope in God's mercy thro Christ, seeing he himself hath both purchased it for us with his own blood, and is always making intercession in heaven for us.

THIS the apostle here makes the chief ground of all our hope: And so he doth, where he saith, *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High-priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck,* Heb. vi. 19, 20. An anchor that is fixed in firm ground, is reckon'd a sure stay for the ship in all weathers; but the anchor of our soul is entered into that within the veil, into that rock that is in heaven: It is fixed there upon Christ himself, our almighty Mediator and Advocate; and therefore must needs keep the soul both sure and stedfast, whatsoever storms or tempests may beat upon it; and so it always will, so long as we hold it fast. Unless our faith fail, Christ be sure will never fail us: And therefore we must take special care to hold fast our faith, as the apostle here speaketh, without wavering or doubting; *For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed,* Jam. i. 6. He is not like a ship, whose anchor is fixed at the bottom of the sea, but like a wave at the top of it, that is tossed to and fro with every wind that bloweth. Such a one is unstable in all his ways: Whereas he whose heart is always fixed, trusting in the Lord his Saviour, and High-priest in heaven, he is *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as he knoweth that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord,* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

THAT therefore we both may and ought to hold fast our faith or hope without wavering, there can be no doubt. The only question is, What we ought thus to believe and hope in God our Saviour for? To that I answer, That we ought to believe and hope in him, for whatsoever God hath promised in his holy word: *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen,* 2 Cor. i. 20. That is, in him they were all made, and in him they are all made good, to such as believe and trust in him for it. Now there is nothing that is or can be good for us, but God hath been pleased in him to promise it to us. But the sum or substance of them all, is contained in that promise which the apostle here mentions, and quotes out of the prophet *Jeremiah, This is the covenant that I will make with them: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more;* Heb. x. 16, 17. Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. Where we see, he promiseth two things, two such things, that if we have them, we shall, together with them, have all things that he hath promised, or can bestow upon us.

FIRST, he here promiseth to put his laws into our hearts, and to write them in our minds. He once wrote his laws upon two tables of stone; but he here promiseth to write them upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, that if we do but look into our own hearts, we may there see, and read, and know what he would have us do. When he had written his laws upon tables of stone, he ordered them to be put into the ark to be kept there; but here he promiseth to put them into our minds, that every one of us may keep them there himself. So that he here promiseth to give us both a right understanding of his will, and likewise power to perform it: To fill our souls with such a sense of our duty to him, as shall incline us to fulfil it: Or, in short, to give us grace to repent and turn to him, so as to walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless; and to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

THIS is the first thing here promised in the new covenant made to mankind in Christ: And this therefore is the first thing which we ought to believe, and trust in him for; even *to open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in him,* Acts xxvi. 18. These are his own words to St. Paul, whereby he plainly acquaints us, that we must first be turned to God, before we can receive forgiveness of sins from him: Which, seeing we cannot be without him, therefore this is the first thing which we ought stedfastly to depend upon him for, in the use of those means which he hath appointed for that purpose. The want of observing this hath been the great reason why so many perish, notwithstanding the death he suffered for them: For they who profess to believe in him, usually believe (if that may be called believing) in him only for the pardon of their sins. However they live, they hope, when they come to die,

die, God will have mercy upon them, and forgive them their sins for Christ's sake. But that is a great, a dangerous, I may truly say a damnable mistake, as being the occasion why many are damned, which otherwise might have been saved by him, if they would but have taken the right course, that which he himself hath prescribed to them; not only in the words before quoted, and many other places of his holy scriptures, but likewise in the very covenant itself which he made with the Father for them; where the first thing that God promiseth, is to put his laws into our hearts, and to write them in our minds.

AND then it follows, in the next place, *and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* He first promised grace to know and keep his laws, and then to pardon our former transgressions of them, so as to remember them no more, but to be as perfectly reconciled to us, as if we had never offended him. And if we would have the benefit of this covenant, wherein all our hopes are founded, we must carefully observe the method in which it runs: We must first believe and hope in our blessed Saviour, for such a measure of God's grace and Holy Spirit to be bestowed upon us, by means of his mediation for us, whereby we may be created in him unto good works, become new creatures, so as not only to repent of our former sins, but to live for the future according to his laws. If we hold fast our faith and hope in Christ for this, he will certainly do it for us, in the use, as I observed before, of such means as he hath ordained for it. And then we shall be duly qualified for the pardon of our sins, and may and ought to believe in him for that too according to the tenor of the foresaid covenant: Not at all doubting, but that, upon our repentance and conversion unto God, by the assistance of his grace, our sins shall be all pardoned, and God reconciled to us by the merits of his death: *For him hath God exalted at his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins; Acts v. 31.* And therefore we may be confident, both that he alone can give either, and that he alone gives both to the true *Israel* of God, even such as believe in him. But he always gives them in the same method wherein they are promised; first, repentance, and then forgiveness of sins: And where he gives the one, he never fails to give the other too. When once a man hath left off his sins, and turned to God, he may be sure his sins are pardoned, and God is turned to him by means of Christ's intercession for him. As under the law, when a man had brought an offering for his sin, and the priest had, with the blood of it, made atonement for his sin, he never doubted but his sin was forgiven, because God had said it should be: So if we offer up ourselves as a living sacrifice unto God, and apply ourselves to our great High-priest, to make atonement for our sins with his own blood; we ought then to believe that God, according to his word, hath forgiven our sins, and must always hold fast this our faith without wavering.

NEITHER must we hold fast our faith only, but likewise the profession of it, without wavering. As we hope for grace and pardon only from Christ, we must profess and own to the world that we do so: We must not be ashamed to acknowledge that we can do nothing of our selves whereby to obtain the favour of God, but that we are beholden wholly to our Saviour for it; and that we do not question, but that by him we shall have it: We must *sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear; 1 Pet. iii. 15.* If any man ask us, why we hope for mercy and salvation? We must freely tell him, it is because Christ died and rose again, and is now in heaven, making intercession for us: That we hope for nothing but from him, but that from him we hope for all things we can desire to make us happy. This we must do, as ever we expect to be saved by him: *For, as his apostle saith, with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation; Rom. x. 10.* And he himself saith, *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven; Mat. x. 32, 33.* Whereby he hath assured us, that he will own and intercede with the Father for those only who own and confess him before men, and for none else. And therefore, as ever we desire to attain the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, we must be sure to hold fast the profession of it, without wavering, as long as we live.

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AND verily we have all the reason in the world to do so: *For*, as the apostle here saith, *He is faithful that promised*. All our hopes of God are grounded upon the promises which he hath made us in Jesus Christ: But he who hath made those promises is faithful; so faithful, that he *cannot lye*, Tit. i. 2. and therefore cannot but do what he hath promised, if we do but that which is required on our parts, even believe that he will: And certainly we have all the reason that can be for it. If an honest man hath promised us a kindness, we take his word, not doubting but that he will do it; but we have infinitely more cause to take God's word, to believe what he hath said, and to hope for what he hath promised; and not only promised, but confirmed it too by an oath: *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have a strong consolation, who hath fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us*; Heb. vi. 18. Why therefore should ye doubt? What need ye fear? do ye fear falling into any evil? *The Lord is faithful who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil*; 2 Thess. iii. 3. Do ye fear, that altho ye are called ye shall not be chosen? *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it*; 1 Thess. v. 24. Do ye fear temptations? *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*: 1 Cor. x. 13. Thus, whensoever any fearful or doubtful thoughts arise in your hearts, ye may and ought to suppress them all with the serious consideration of the faithfulness of God, who for the merits, and by the mediation of your Advocate in heaven, hath given you such exceeding great and precious promises, that by those ye might be partakers of the divine nature; 2 Pet. i. 4.

HAVING therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God; 2 Cor. vii. 1. Let us keep our bodies under, and bring them into subjection to our souls: Let us read and hear God's holy word, that we may know what he hath either promised or required of us, and resolve to believe and act accordingly: Let us pray daily to him, in the name of Christ our Saviour, for wisdom and grace, and all things necessary to our being saved by him: Let us take all opportunities that we can get to receive the sacrament of his last supper, so as to partake of the great propitiation which he hath made for the sins of the world: Let us be always thinking and exercising our faith on him, as always appearing in the presence of God for us: Let us openly profess our dependence upon him, and our obligations to him, for all the promises that God hath made us: Let us hold fast this profession of our faith without wavering, *He is faithful that promised*.

AND let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works. This is the next inference which the apostle here draws from Christ's continuing to execute for us the office of an High-priest, and it naturally follows upon it: For seeing we have such an High-priest, such an Advocate always making reconciliation for us in heaven, we must needs be obliged to do all we can for him upon earth: But all that we can do for him, is only to promote his honour and glory, by continuing steadfast in the profession of his faith our selves, and by exciting others to do so too, and to shew they do it by their love to one another, and doing the works which he hath set them: Without which we cannot be truly said to hold fast the profession of our faith, nor indeed to believe in him at all; forasmuch as true faith always works by love, and produceth all manner of good works.

HENCE therefore the apostle here adviseth, That we who profess the faith of Christ, being all of the same body, should not live as strangers, but should consider, observe, or take notice of one another, so as to provoke, excite, or stir up one another, not to wrath and anger, not to envy and malice, not to hatred and emulation, not to strife and contention, but to love and good works; to love one another as he hath loved us, and to do all such good works as he hath prepared for us to walk in; that our *light may so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven*, according as he hath taught us, Mat. v. 16. But that ye may better understand how this ought to be done, it will be necessary to consider what is requir'd in order to it.

First, It is required, that when ye see a brother, any one you are acquainted with that is called a christian; when you see such a one walking in rioting or drunkennels, chambering or wantonness, in strife or envying, or any way disorderly or unbecoming his holy profession; you must shew your love and kindness to him, by admonishing, reproofing, and rebuking him for it, and by using all means to reclaim and bring him to himself again: *Thou shalt not, saith the law, hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt*

shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him; Lev. xix. 17. Plainly implying that he who doth not do this, is so far from loving, that he hates his brother. But how this ought to be done, St. Paul teacheth you, saying, *Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted: Gal. vi. 1.* You must do it with that calmness and sedateness of temper, and with such mild and gentle words, that he may see your christian love and charity in it; that you do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother; *2 Thess. iii. 15.* that you are sensible of your own, as well as of his infirmities, and therefore do no more to him, than what you would have him to do to you in the like case; even put you in mind of any fault he sees in you, and reprove you for it, lest you should continue in it, and so be ruined and undone for ever. Wherefore, when you have occasion to perform this duty to your brother, as you often have to one or other; as you must be sure to take the most seasonable time to do it, so ye must be sure to do it with all the tenderness and meekness as becomes a christian, a servant of Jesus Christ, the pattern of meekness: *For the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will; 1 Tim. ii. 24, 25, 26.*

BUT let us hear the divine orders and directions that our great Lord and Master himself hath given us, to be carefully observed in the performance of this duty to our brother: *If thy brother, saith he, shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican: Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17.* Where you see it is your Saviour's will and pleasure, that if any of your brethren commit a fault, whereby you and the church may be justly offended, you must not immediately blaze it abroad, and make a noise about it in the world; but before you tell any one else of it, you must first go to him alone, and acquaint him with what you have heard or seen, only between him and you: And if by this means you can bring him to repentance, your work is done, you have gained your brother, you have got him out of the devil's snare. But if he refuse to hearken to your admonition alone, then you must get one or two more to join with you in it, to assist you in it, and likewise to be witnesses both of your carriage to him, and his to you. But if, after all this, he still neglects to reform and amend his life, upon this your christian admonition of him, then you must find means to acquaint the governors of the church with it, those to whom Christ hath committed the keys; that is, the power of taking in or shutting out of the church; that they may use their authority in admonishing, censuring, and inflicting such ecclesiastical punishments upon him, as by the blessing of God may restore him to a sound mind. But if he refuse to submit to the authority of the church, and to do what she also prescribes for his recovery; then you must look upon him no longer as a brother, but as a heathen or publican, cut off from Christ's body, as all such rotten and incurable members should be. You have now done your duty, and are no longer bound to admonish him as a brother, but rather to shun his company; according to the apostle's advice, saying, *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them; Rom. xvi. 17.* And again, *If any man obey not our word by his epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed; 2 Thess. iii. 14.* But there are some, who to all outward appearance are very sober and innocent, at least so far, that none can accuse them of any gross or notorious sin; but yet, in the mean while, they live only to themselves, without any regard to their duty either to God or their neighbours, unless it be a little now and then for fashion's-sake. Now, in order to your performing what is required in my text, it is necessary to consider these also, *To provoke them to love and to good works.* I suppose there are but few of you but know some such among your acquaintance, and none but may be very serviceable both to God and them, by putting them in mind, as ye have occasion, that they must not only eschew evil, but do good in the world: That it is not enough for them to avoid what God hath forbidden, but they must do also what he hath commanded, as ever they expect and hope for his love and fa-
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your. And accordingly you must provoke and stir them up all ye can, to set upon the great duties of religion in good earnest; to love God above all things, and their neighbours as themselves; to make conscience of performing their daily devotions; to spend the Lord's day especially in his service; to be constant at his publick worship; to frequent the sacrament of the Lord's supper; that they be careful to maintain good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: In short, that they follow *peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*; Heb. xii. 14. Thus St. Paul did what is here required: *If by any means, saith he, I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them*; Rom. xi. 14. And thus all christians ought to do. And there is none of you but may, if he will, whatsoever his state and condition be in this world.

YE have all your severall relations, neighbours, companions, and acquaintance, which you often converse with, and therefore cannot but know how they live. Now if ye perceive that they are careless and negligent of any of the great duties they owe to God or man, ye ought to put them in mind of it, and use all means ye can to persuade them to take more care of themselves, and of their future state. Ye do not know what a word spoken in season may do; it may save a soul: Perhaps they may slight it at present, but God can bring it to their remembrance when he pleaseth, and fix it so firmly upon their minds, as to make it a great means of their salvation, as he often doth. Or howsoever it prove, ye have discharged your duty both to God and them, you have endeavoured to provoke them to love and good works; and whether they mind it at present or no, they will one day see cause to thank you for it, and you your selves will receive benefit and comfort from it, especially when by the blessing of God it proves successful; (As ye have no cause to fear but it sometimes will.) For thus saith the Holy Ghost: *If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*; James v. 19, 20. *And they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars, for ever and ever*; Dan. xii. 3.

AND as for such among you who make it your great care and study to serve God, as I do not doubt but some do, you also in the next place must *consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works*, by exhorting, assisting, directing and encouraging one another, in all the great duties of religion; by shewing all christian love and brotherly kindness to each other; by often meeting, advising and consulting together, how to improve the talents which your great Master hath put into your hands to the best advantage; how you may bring most glory unto God, and how ye may do the most good in the place and station where he hath set you. This God takes special notice of whensoever ye do it, and sets a mighty value upon it; as appears from the prophet, saying, *Then they that feared the Lord, spake often together; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him*; Mal. iii. 16, 17. But for that purpose you must especially meet together, as oft as possibly you can, in God's house, and at his holy table, to know his will, to praise his name, to feed together upon the bread of life, and to join your forces together in praying to almighty God with all reverence and godly fear, both for your selves and one another, that he would give you such a measure of his grace and Holy Spirit, whereby you may be enabled to walk together in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your life.

THIS is that which the apostle would have principally observ'd in this case, as appears from the words following my text: for having said, *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works*: He immediately adds by way of explication, *Not forsaking the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another*. Whereby he may plainly intimate, that the best way to hold fast the faith, and to provoke one another to love, and to good works, is to keep close to the church (as the fathers, especially the *Latin*, understand the words) and to the publick assemblies which are there kept for the service and worship of God; this being the great means appointed by God himself, whereby to confirm our faith, to enflame our love, and to excite one another to all sorts of pious and good works: Which it doth in a wonderful manner, whensoever it is performed as it ought, with that reverence and

godly fear which is due to the special presence of the most high God. This I do not question, but many here present have found by their own experience: For altho ye have sometimes gone dull and cold into the church, or assembly of the saints, have not your devotions been warm'd, have not your hearts burn'd within you, when you have seen how attentive they are in harkening to God's holy word read, or explained to them; how cheerfully they lift up their voices together in praising his holy name; and how humbly they prostrate themselves upon their knees before him, in the prayers and supplications which they offer up to his divine Majesty? Such solemn performances as these, when duly observ'd, cannot but of themselves very much awaken and stir you up to join heartily with them; but much more, as being actuated and influenced as they always are, by God's Holy Spirit moving upon them, and blessing and sanctifying them to the great ends and purposes for which he hath appointed them. Inasmuch, that many of those also, who have come to church only out of custom, without any desire or design to serve God there, have by this means been strangely wrought upon to join as well as they could in it. as St. Paul observeth in the like case, where speaking of the christian assemblies, he saith, *If all prophesy, or perform their religious duties there as they ought, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth,* 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. Much more they who come with pure hearts, and sincere desires, to perform their devotions to almighty God; they seldom or never fail of having such a sacred fire kindled in their breasts, which will soon break forth, and provoke them to love and to good works. This many have already found, and ye would all do so, if ye would but sincerely make trial of it.

BUT then, on the other side, they who forsake or leave off the assembling of themselves together, they do not only sin in not performing their duty, but they expose and lay themselves open to all manner of sin and mischief in the world. They can never hold fast their faith, nor be provoked to love and good works; in that they do not use the means for it. And yet this was the manner of some, as the apostle saith in his days: And so it is now. There are some, too many, who never made any conscience of frequenting the publick worship of God; no, not upon the Lord's-day, but spend that, as well as the other days, about worldly business, or else in sloth and idleness; and so live as without God in the world. But they will one day find, to their cost, there is a God that judgeth the world, and will judge them most severely for neglecting the duty and service which they owe him. But there are others, who have for some time made conscience of attending upon our solemn assemblies, and have done many things gladly, and yet afterwards have fallen off into such a coldness and indifferency in religion, that they concern themselves no longer about the duties of it, or else take up with the form instead of the power of it, and so leave off our publick assemblies altogether.

I SUPPOSE, there are none such here present at this time. However, to prevent your ever coming into their number, I desire you to consider what the apostle here saith, *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin,* ver. 26. But lest you should mistake his meaning, you must take notice, that by sinning, he doth not mean any one particular sin, but a complication of sins, like that whereby the angels fell. St. Peter saith, *God spared not the angels that sinned,* 2 Pet. ii. 4. St. Jude, *The angels that kept not their first estate,* Jude 6. This was their sin; and this the apostle here means by sinning, when men keep not their first estate, but after they have received the knowledge of the truth, reject and apostatize again from it; that this is his meaning, appears also from his saying afterwards, *He that despised Moses law, not any one commandment only, but the whole law, died without mercy.* Deut. xvii. 2, 3. Num. xv. 30, 31. *Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?* ver. 28, 29. Where by sinning, we see he means when men fall off quite from Christ, despise him and the Holy Spirit by which he spoke and wrought so many miracles, and so are in effect guilty of that which he calls speaking against the *Holy Ghost,* Matt. xii. 23. which he there saith, shall never be pardoned. This is that which St. John calls the *sin unto death,* 1 John v. 17. This is that falling away, which they who are guilty of, the apostle saith, *It is impossible to renew them again to re-*
pentance;

penitance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, Heb. vi. 6. And here again there is no more sacrifice for sin; there is none but that which Christ offered for any sin. This they reject, and therefore can have none at all, but must of necessity perish in their sin.

THIS I look upon, in short, as the plain sense of these difficult places of scripture. From whence we may learn what a dangerous, what a desperate condition they are in; who, when they have taken upon them the profession of the true religion, do afterwards apostatize from it, and leave off the means of grace, which are administered in it. It is true, if they ever recover themselves, it is a sign they did not quite fall away, and therefore may still find mercy. But this happens but very seldom, and therefore ye had need have a care, not only of a total apostacy, but of every thing that looks like it. Keep off from it as far as ye can. Come not near the borders of it, lest you fall at last downright into it. *Be not tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive,* Eph. iv. 14. *Take heed of these false teachers among you, who privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction,* 2 Pet. ii. 1. *Be not in the number of those who will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears,* 2 Tim. iv. 3. *Mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them: For they that are such, serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple,* Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Let not every slight occasion keep you from the publick worship of God or the holy sacraments, lest at length ye come to slight them altogether, as some do. But hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, and consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, exciting, confirming, and building up one another in your most holy faith. In a word, strive all ye can to shine as lights in the world, to be patterns and examples to one another in your piety and devotions towards God, in your contempt of the world, in humility, in temperance, in purity, in meekness, in patience, in justice, in charity, in all manner of christian virtues, all the days of your life: And never cast away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward, Heb. x. 35. *But be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the works of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord,* 1 Cor. xv. 58. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, Mark xiii. 13. *He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*



S E R M O N LXXXIV.

Repentance the end of Christ's coming into the World.

LUKE V. 32.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

THE eternal Son of God having from the beginning of the world undertaken to redeem fallen man, and restore him to his first estate, with the price of his own blood; he was pleased for that purpose, when the fulness of time appointed by the Father was come, to take upon him the nature of man, by uniting it to his own divine person; that so whatsoever he should suffer in that nature, being suffered by a divine person, might be of infinite value and merit, and so a sufficient price for the redemption of all mankind. And being accordingly here upon earth, *found in fashion as a man*, before he actually laid down the said price by dying in our stead, he was most graciously pleased to spend some time among men, to assure them by many signs and wonders, that he was their Redeemer or Saviour; and to acquaint them with the terms or conditions upon which particular persons might partake of that redemption which he came to purchase for them: For which end, among other things, he chose out twelve men, according to the number of the tribes of *Israel*, to be ear and eye-witnesses of what he said and did; and likewise his apostles or messengers, to go about and publish the same unto the world; of which number, one was named *Matthew*, or *Levi*, who was before a publican, or one of the farmers of the publick revenues belonging to the crown in that place. How Christ, our ever-blessed Redeemer called him, is fully described in the words before my text, with the circumstances of it; which, as they gave the occasion, so they will give great light also, to the words of my text, and therefore must be first considered.

OUR Saviour, therefore, being at a sea-port town in *Galilee*, where there was a custom-house, he there saw a publican named *Levi*, or *Matthew*, sitting at the receipt of custom, or place where the customs were received by the publicans that sat there for that purpose: To him Christ directed himself, and said, *Follow me*; ver. 27. The man being very rich, and busy at that time in receiving, or at least expecting money, might justly wonder to hear one whom he did not know, or whom he thought much below him, laying such a peremptory command upon him, *to follow me*; and therefore one would think he should have slighted, or taken no notice at all of what was said to him: But Christ back'd his words with such divine power as wrought effectually upon the man to observe the command, how much soever it seemed against his interest; *For he left all, rose up, and followed him*; ver. 28. Neither did he only go after him, but when he came to him, he invited him to his own house, and *made him a great feast there*; ver. 29.

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WHERE we may observe, by the way, that the vow of poverty so much cried up in the church of *Rome*, and made by the monks, hath no foundation, as they pretend, in this or any other such-like places of scripture, where any are said *to have left all, and followed Christ*. For here we see, that after *St. Matthew* had left all, he yet had an house of his own, and an estate, wherewith he could make a great feast. And therefore, by his leaving all, cannot be meant that he gave up his right and title to all he had, or distributed it all among the poor; but that he left his gainful place, and all his concerns at the custom-house, and whatsoever else would hinder him from waiting upon Christ, and observing his commands. But the estate he had justly acquired, either by inheritance or purchase, was so far from being an hindrance to him, that it gave him the happy occasion of shewing his respect to Christ, by inviting him to his house, and so giving him an opportunity of doing good to many others. For though Christ was the principal guest, and it was for his sake that the feast was made, yet there were many others invited besides him and his disciples: For it is said, *And there were a great company of publicans, and of others that sat down with them*; ver. 29. And this was that which the scribes and pharisees were so much offended at, as reckoning it a great sin to keep company, much more to sit down at the same table, with notorious sinners; and therefore *They murmured, and said to the disciples, why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?* ver. 30. Which our blessed Redeemer over-hearing, he gave them several reasons why he conversed with such people: First, saith he, *They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*; ver. 31. As if he had said, I go to such people, as a physician goes to his patients, not to encrease, but cure their malady: I do not converse with them to encourage them in their sin, but to turn them from it. They who are in health have no need of a physician; and if those were righteous themselves, they would have no occasion for me: but because they are ill, and out of tune, therefore I keep them company, to bring them, if I can, to a better temper. And then he adds, *Go ye and learn what that meaneth*, in the prophet *Hosea* vi. 6. *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*; Mat. ix. 13. Though I do not blame the custom of abstaining from the company of open sinners, that being a silent reproof of them, and the way to prevent being infected by them, and so in some cases may be pleasing to God, as the sacrifices are which he himself commanded; yet he himself saith by his prophet, that he *prefers mercy before sacrifice*: And therefore my shewing mercy to these people, by endeavouring to bring them off from their sins, is far more acceptable to God, than to shun their company, and leave them wholly to themselves.

THE last reason he gives, is in the words of my text; *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*. Whereby he signifies to them, that when he kept company with sinners, he was about the work he came into the world to do, and therefore was bound to do it: For he came to call such as they were to repentance; not such as were righteous already. And therefore unless he sometimes conversed with sinners, he could not have done the business he came into the world about.

THESE words are much to be observed, because they shew us one great end of our Saviour's coming into the world; and that too from his own mouth, who best knew it, and took this opportunity to acquaint us with it: That we may not think, that seeing he came to expiate our sins, he came likewise to give us any countenance or encouragement to continue in them; but rather that he therefore died for them, that we might live no longer in them: *For he came not to call the righteous, but he came to call sinners to repentance*; sinners, such as we all are: And therefore must needs be highly concerned to understand his full meaning in these words. For which purpose we shall, by his assistance, consider,

- I. WHOM he means by the righteous.
- II. WHOM by sinners.
- III. WHAT by repentance.
- IV. WHAT by his calling sinners to repentance; and also how, and why he doth it. To which few heads, all that is necessary to be known from these words, may be easily reduced.

THE first may well be made a question; it being made a great question, whether there were any righteous persons in the world at that time. Be sure there

were none so, in a legal sense. None but Christ himself so perfectly righteous in all points, as the law required: For that hath concluded all under sin; *That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*, Rom. iii. 19. *As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one*; Rom. iii. 10. *There is not a just or righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*, Eccles. vii. 20. In which sense therefore, our Saviour could not call the righteous, for there were none such to call.

BUT tho not in a legal, yet in an evangelical sense, there were doubtless several righteous persons upon earth at that time; such as God, according to the tenure of the new covenant, was pleased to accept of as righteous in Christ, altho they were not perfectly so in themselves. Such were *Zacharias and Elizabeth*; *They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*, Luke i. 6. Such was their son, *John the baptist*: Such was the blessed virgin: And, such was *Nathaniel*, of whom Christ himself gave this testimony; *behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*, John i. 47. But such as these had repented of their sins already, and therefore needed not to be called upon to begin it again.

BESIDES those who were truly so in the sight of God, there were many in those days who were righteous in their own eyes: Such were the pharisees, or, as the word signifies, the separatists at that time, who, together with the scribes, murmured against our Lord for eating with publicans and sinners, and so gave him occasion to utter this divine sentence. These being mighty scrupulous and precise in observing the traditions of their fathers, and the little rites and ceremonies of their law, which were not very troublesome, or chargeable, they were esteemed very righteous, both by others and themselves too, altho in the mean while *they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith*, as our Saviour tells them to their faces, Mat. xxiii. 23. and therefore calls them hypocrites. But whatsoever he who knew their hearts was pleased to call them, they still looked upon themselves as holy and righteous, and despised others as wicked and sinful wretches, not fit for them to keep company with. There have been in all ages such proud self-conceited people; and never more than now among our selves. But the condition of such people is very sad and dangerous; for they not thinking themselves to be sinners, it would be in vain to call upon 'em to repent: And therefore they are not in the number of those whom Christ came to call, at least in an ordinary way; for he *came to call sinners*: whereas they conceived themselves to be righteous; and therefore slighted all our Saviour said or did, more than any other people that we read of in all the gospels.

BUT after all, when our Saviour saith, that *he came not to call the righteous to repentance*, he doth not determine one way or another; whether there be any righteous persons upon earth or no, that is nothing to his present purpose: For he speaks here only by way of supposition; that supposing there be any righteous in this world, he did *not come to call them*: for they would not need to be called, no more than *they who are whole need a physician*; as he himself speaks in the words before my text. As in that parallel place, which hath so much puzzled criticks and commentators; I mean the parable of the lost sheep, where our Saviour supposeth, that *a man hath a hundred sheep, and that one of them being lost, he leaves the ninety and nine, to look after that; and having found it, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray*; Luke xv. 4, 5, 6. Mat. xviii. 13. And then he adds, *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance*; Luke xv. 7. Where he plainly speaks only by way of supposition, That in case there be a hundred persons together, and ninety nine of these be so just or righteous that they need no repentance, but one doth need it; and if he accordingly doth repent, the holy angels are more rejoiced at him than at all the other, because he gives them fresh matter of joy, which the others do not. But still the case is the same, as to the sense and truth of the parable, whether there be or be not any such righteous persons upon earth. Our Saviour doth not say there are, or are not; he only supposeth the case, he doth not decide it, and therefore we ought not to trouble our heads about it. So here in my text, where he saith, that *he came not to call the righteous*; he speaks only upon supposition that there were such in the world, and if there were, he did not come to call them who would need it, but *he came to call sinners to repentance*.

BUT whom doth our Saviour here mean by sinners? What kind of people are they? They are such as are not righteous, as appears from the words themselves, where the righteous and sinners are opposed to one another; *I came not, saith he, to call the righteous, but sinners*. So that all are sinners that are not righteous. Wherefore, to know

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who they are who are here called sinners, we must first consider, who may be truly said in a scripture sense to be righteous. And for that we need go no farther than to the place before quoted, where it is said of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, that *they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*. They walked in all the commandments, that is, in all the precepts of the moral law, keeping as close as possibly they could to every one of them, so as never willingly to do any thing that was there forbidden, nor leave any thing undone that is there commanded. And *they walked also in all the ordinances of the Lord*, that is, in all such duties as God had ordained to put them in mind of their Saviour, and to exercise their faith in him for the pardon of their sins, and for God's acceptance of what they did for his sake, tho it was not so perfect as the law required. Such were the sacrifices under the old testament, and the sacraments under the new: By this means, *they were righteous before God*. He was pleased to accept of them as such, upon the account of what his Son, in whom they believed, had done and suffered; or, which was the same thing, had promised and undertaken to do and suffer for them. And so at this time; all who sincerely endeavour to the utmost of their power, to observe all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, so as not to allow or indulge themselves in any known sin, nor in the neglect of any known duty; and after all, believe in Christ, trusting and depending only upon his merits and mediation for it; such are most certainly justified before God, or accounted of as righteous in Christ, and are indeed the only righteous persons upon earth; and by consequence, all others, how many soever they be, they are all sinners.

THEY are all sinners, *eo nomine*, upon that very account, because they are not righteous. For there is no medium between a righteous man and a sinner: But all mankind are either the one or the other; and so they will find at the last day, when Christ shall divide them all into two sorts, *sheep* and *goats*: There will be no third sort then found among them: Neither is there now. Every man in the world is either like a harmless sheep, or a stinking goat: He is either a righteous man, or a sinner. And seeing, as I have shewn, that none are righteous, but they who do what they can to observe all things that are commanded, either in the law or gospel; they who do not so, are sinners, whatsoever good works they may seem to do. For though nothing less than sincere obedience to all the laws of God can denominate a man to be righteous; the wilful breach of any one, makes him to be a sinner. This is that which St. *James* means, where he saith, *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*, James ii. 10. He is guilty of all; not that he is guilty of every sin, and has broke every one of God's laws by breaking any one of them; but he is guilty of the breach of the whole law in general: As he that breaks any one article in a covenant, breaks the whole covenant. And therefore he is liable to all the punishments which are threatened in it, they being all denounced against *every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10.

THIS is a thing much to be observed. For men are very apt to be mistaken in this point; as I have often found to my grief, both in visiting the sick, and upon other occasions. If they have not been guilty of any gross sin, they presently conclude, that all is well with them; when upon enquiry I have found, they have lived in the neglect of many duties which they owe to God and their neighbour, and have been also guilty of many other sins, which not looking so black and hideous in the eyes of the world, are seldom taken notice of, although they be as dangerous and damnable as any other. And therefore, I must pray and beseech you, to have a care that you do not cheat and deceive your selves, so as to think you are not sinners, because you are not such notorious and open sinners as some others are. For you may be as notorious and open sinners in the sight of God, as they are in the sight of men: As for example; what if thou beest just and honest in thy dealing? If thou beest censorious, or uncharitable, thou art still a sinner. What if thou beest chaste and sober? Yet if thou beest proud, passionate or covetous, thou art still a sinner. What if thou lovest thy friends? Unless thou lovest thy enemies too, thou art still a sinner. What if thou lovest God above some things? Unless thou lovest him above all things, thou art still a sinner. What if thou never swearest? Yet if thou beest a liar, thou art still a sinner. What if thou readest God's holy word, and hearest sermons? Unless thou prayest also, and receivest the holy sacrament, thou art still a sinner. And what if thou doest hurt to none? Unless thou doest all the good thou canst, thou art still a sinner: The one being as much commanded, as the other

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is forbidden. Thus I might run thro all duties and vices whatsoever. If a man perform ever so many duties, if there be any which he doth not perform; or if he avoid ever so many sins, if there be any he doth not avoid; he is still a sinner for all that, and therefore in the number of those which our Saviour calleth to repentance.

WHAT that is, is the next thing to be considered. And it had need to be considered well, forasmuch as our eternal welfare depends upon it; and yet nothing is more common than to be deceived about it. There are but few that ever put the question to themselves, whether they have repented or no: Such may conclude, without any more ado, that they have not. And they who do consider it, are apt to flatter themselves with the thoughts that they have repented, when they have no ground at all to think so. If they do but acknowledge their sins, and are sorry now and then for them, they presently think that this is repenting of them. Especially, if they do but leave off some of the most scandalous vices they were formerly addicted to, they look upon themselves as true penitents; altho they still retain many of their former sins; or, perhaps, take up others as bad or worse than any of those which they left off. As, when a prodigal becomes covetous: When a publican becomes a pharisee; When a prophane derider of religion becomes a sceptick or hypocrite in it. As in the church of *Rome*, when they who have led wicked and leud lives for many years together, enter themselves into any of their religious orders, as they call them, this is stiled conversion, and from that time forward they are reckoned in the number of their religious. And so among our selves; when such people join themselves to any sect or separate congregation, which are much of the same nature, then they are esteemed converts, and think themselves as holy and religious as the best. They are conscious to themselves that they ought not to be such as they were before, and if they do but become any thing else, whatsoever it be, they please themselves with the thoughts that they have repented of their sins, and are become new creatures; when after all, this is but turning from one sin to another, and often from that which is less to one that is more dangerous; as filling their minds with a conceit that they have repented already, and therefore need not take any more care about it. And by consequence, living and dying without it, will repent eternally in the other world, that they never truly repented in this.

BUT what then doth our Saviour here mean by repentance; that repentance to which he calleth sinners? He means such an hearty sorrow and contrition for sins past, as puts a man for the future upon stedfast resolutions, and sincere endeavours, to suppress, avoid, and abhor all manner of sin; not only because of the ill effects it will have upon himself, but because it is sin, or a transgression of God's law, and an offence to his Divine Majesty. And therefore, such a one doth not only forsake some, but all sins, to the utmost of his power; and that too, not only so as not to commit them any more, but so as not to have any love or affection for them. Neither doth he only forsake the sins he was wont to commit, but he performs all such duties as he was wont to neglect. That this is the true notion of repentance in this place, appears from the word which our Lord here useth, *μετάνοια*, which signifies the changing, not of a man's life or manners only, but of his mind, when that is wholly taken off from sin, and fixed upon God, and set to obey his commandments; whereby he is quite changed from what he was, and therefore is called a new man and a new creature; because *old things are past away, and all things are become new* in him, 2 Cor. v. 17.

THUS, in the parable of the prodigal son, our Saviour describes his repentance by his coming to himself, *Luke xv. 17.* implying, That before the young man had been besides himself, but now *he came to himself*, to his right mind again: And so, of a prodigal, became a most dutiful and obedient son, wholly another man than what he had been before. The same may be observed of *Zaccheus*; what a wonderful change was wrought in him so soon as Christ had called him to repentance? He being a publican, and one of the chief of them, had been given up to cheating, oppressing, and extorting money from people, by laying several things falsely to their charge. But Christ was no sooner come into his house, but he, being heartily penitent for his former wicked life, stands up, and saith, *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold*; *Luke xix. 8.* Thus it was also with *St. Paul*, when Christ had called him, as he did with his own mouth, to repentance. What one man can be imagined more different from another, than he was

from his former self? He before had persecuted, and now preached the faith of Christ. He was wont to go from city to city to suppress it, and now he travels from country to country to propagate and establish it, and of the greatest sinner became one of the greatest saints that ever lived. But I needed not have gone so far from my text for instances of this nature: For here we find that Christ had no sooner called *Levi*, saying to him, *Follow me*; but immediately he left all and followed him: He left the whole course of life that he had before led, and gave up himself entirely to the service of Christ: So that he spent his whole life afterwards in preaching, and then laid it down in the defence of the gospel. This was true repentance indeed; and therefore it is such as this which Christ calls sinners to.

WHAT our Lord means by his *calling sinners to repentance*, is the next question to be resolved. And it will be easy to do it now we understand the terms, whom he means by sinners, and what by repentance. For his calling them to it in general, is nothing else but his advising, exhorting, requiring, commanding, or persuading them to do it; as here he called *Levi*, by saying to him, *Follow me*; who therefore presently did so: And so he calls upon all sinners, all that have lived in any sin or sins: He calls upon them to leave their sins, and to follow him, by walking in his holy steps, and observing all things whatsoever he hath commanded them. This is properly his calling them to repentance. But that we may both better understand, and be more ready to hearken to his call, I shall, by his assistance, consider two things concerning it.

1st, WHY he calls sinners to repentance.

2^{dly}, How, or by what means, he doth it.

HE that considers Christ's infinite glory and power, as he is the eternal Son of God, of the same nature with the Father, may justly wonder why he should concern himself so much about sinful mortals upon earth, as to call them to repentance: They being all but a company of ungrateful rebels against his divine Majesty; which he may justly crush into nothing, or condemn to the infernal pit when he pleaseth. *The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation by rebelling against him, them he hath reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day*; Jude 6. Never vouchsafing to call any one of them so much as once to repentance, but suffering them all to go on in their sins, and continue in that forlorn condition they have brought themselves into, without taking any notice of them, but only to torment and punish them. And yet they are his creatures as well as men are. Why then should he take any more care of man than he doth of them? And besides, what advantage can he get by the conversion of sinful men? Wherein is he better or worse, whether they repent or no? No way, certainly. It is all one to him and his essential glory, whether they be good or bad, happy or miserable. He is not the less happy, because they are miserable; nor the more, because they are happy. His happiness is always like himself, infinite, and therefore not capable of being increased or diminished by any thing that men, or any creatures in the world, can do. And yet notwithstanding we find him all along very earnest with sinful men to repent; yea as he himself here saith, *He came on purpose to call them to it*.

THIS is a great astonishing mystery, so far above our reach, that we should never have so much as thought on it, if he himself had not revealed it to us in his holy word: Where we find, that this all-glorious and almighty Person upon the fall of mankind in their first parents, was pleased of his infinite goodness to undertake their redemption, by suffering in their nature the death they had deserved, and by that means mediating or interceding so effectually between God and them, that they may be restored to their first estate, upon the most easy terms that could be imagined, even upon their repentance and faith in him. And therefore, after he appeared publicly in the world, the first thing he said to mankind, was, *Repent, and believe the gospel*; Mark i. 15. Implying that if they did these two things, they might be saved by him, otherwise not. Where we may likewise observe that he puts repenting before believing, as being the first thing required, in order to our obtaining eternal redemption by him; and that without which it would avail us nothing to believe, if we could possibly do it. But indeed the thing is impossible; it is impossible to believe in a gospel-sense, without such repenting as is there required. As for example: No man can believe in Christ for the pardon of his sins, but according to the promises which he

hath made to that purpose; his promises being the only ground we have to build our faith upon. But all the promises that he hath made for the pardon of our sins, are still made with this proviso or condition, that we repent of them. As, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon: Isa. lv. 7. Repent, and turn your selves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin; Ezek. xviii. 30. Repent, and be converted, saith St. Peter, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, Acts iii. 19.* And so all along, both in the old and new testament, God hath promised to pardon our sins, if we do repent; but there is not one promise in all the bible, that God will pardon any man's sins, unless he first repent of them.

WHEREFORE seeing no man hath any ground to believe in Christ for the pardon of his sins, but only his promise to do it; and seeing he hath no where promised that he will pardon any man's sins, unless he repent: Hence it necessarily followeth, that no man, who doth not first repent, can truly believe in Christ for the pardon of his sins; for he hath no ground for such a faith. And therefore if any one fancies or presumeth, notwithstanding his impentence, that he doth believe, it is not faith properly so called, but mere presumption and fancy; especially considering, that as God hath no where promised pardon and salvation to any, but those who do repent; so he hath threatened ruin and destruction to all that do not: And that too with his own mouth, saying, *I tell you, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, Luke xiii. 3.* Which he that came into the world on purpose to save us, would never certainly have said, if it had been possible for us to be saved without repenting. And therefore we may well conclude, and lay it down as a most undoubted truth, that altho' repentance hath nothing in it of merit or condignity, yet it is so absolutely required of God in order to it, and so necessary to qualify us for pardon and salvation, that no man ever yet was, or ever can be, pardoned and saved without it.

FROM hence therefore we may easily see into the reason why Christ calls sinners to repentance: For seeing he came into the world on purpose to save sinners, and yet none can be saved except they repent; unless he called men to repentance, he could not bring them to salvation, and so his labour would have been all lost; and the great work he undertook for us would have fallen to the ground, and come to nothing; whereas, by calling sinners to repentance, he doth the work he came into the world about: For upon their repentance, he saves them from their sins, procures their pardon, and restores them to the love and favour of Almighty God; and so at last, by the virtue of his merits and mediation for them, he brings them to eternal life and glory: And therefore this was one great end of his coming into the world; as he himself here saith, *I came to call sinners to repentance.* And this was the great reason why he called them to it; even that his blood might not be spilt in vain, but that men, repenting of their sins, might be washed in it, and so presented to God without spot or blemish.

BUT then the next question is, how or by what means he doth this: In answer to which, we may first observe in general, that he hath many, infinitely more ways than we know of, whereby to bring people off from their sins, and turn them to God. For as he is the head of all things to the church, he orders all things so as to make them conduce one way or other to this end, if men would but take notice of it. As all things work together for good to them who love God; so all things work together to make men love God, if they could but see it. All the mercies he bestows, and all the judgments he lays upon them, are for this end: As the apostle saith, *Despise thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? Rom. ii. 4.* This is a thing he would have all men know and mind, that every act of love and goodness which God is pleased to shew any man, is designed not to drive or force, but to lead him to repentance, to work upon him suitably to his nature, as he is a reasonable creature, capable of discerning between good and evil, and of chusing the one before the other: And as all the blessings he bestows, so all the judgments he inflicts, are in order to the same end. For as the apostle observes, *He chasteneth us, not for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness, Heb. xii. 10.* that we might repent, and turn to God, and so be made holy, as he who hath called us is holy, in all manner of conversation.

BUT

BUT our blessed Redeemer speaking in my text, not of the other methods whereby he brings them, but only of his calling sinners to repentance; I shall insist at present only upon that, as the ordinary means whereby he doth it; and consider how he always hath, still doth, and ever will call them to it. For he having from the beginning of the world undertaken the redemption of fallen man, hath in all ages inspired some men with his own holy Spirit, to call upon others, in his Name, to repent, and observe the laws of God. For that it was his Spirit that spake all along in the prophets, we are fully assur'd by the same Spirit speaking in St. Peter, and saying, that the prophets prophesied of the grace of God, *Searching what, and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,* 1 Pet. i. 11. From whence it is manifest, that it was the Spirit of Christ that was in the prophets: It was by that they prophesied, and called upon men to repent; and therefore it was he that did it all along by his Spirit in them. It was by his Spirit that Noah was not only just and righteous himself; but, as St. Peter saith, he was a *preacher of righteousness*, 2 Pet. ii. 5. So that Christ, by his holy Spirit in Noah, preached to the people of that age, calling upon them to repent of their sins, and work righteousness, so as to become such as he was, righteous before God.

* THIS will give us great light into that obscure passage of the same apostle, where he saith, that *Christ hath also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (that he might bring us to God) being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved,* 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19, 20. The question is, in what sense Christ is here said to go and preach to the spirits in prison: For the understanding whereof, we must observe three things.

1. As the souls which are in heaven are called *the spirits of just men made perfect*, Heb. xii. 23. so they which are in hell, are here called *the spirits that are in prison, being delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*; as this same apostle speaks of the apostate angels, 2 Pet. ii. 4.

2. WE must observe that he here speaks only of those who were disobedient in the days of Noah.

3. THAT he saith, Christ went and preached to them (not in his own person, but) by his Spirit. Now, that he did so in a literal sense, is plain from what I before observed out of the same apostle, who is the best interpreter of his own words: For seeing Noah was a preacher of righteousness; and seeing the Spirit of Christ was in him, as being a prophet, and one sent to preach the word of God; and seeing they would not hearken to his preaching, they were cast into the infernal pit, or prison, where they have been ever since, and will be for ever. Therefore it may be truly and properly said, that Christ, by his Spirit, went and preached to the spirits in prison, or which were in prison in St. Peter's time; for so all then were, to whom Noah by the Spirit of Christ preached, except the seven that were saved with him in the ark.

AND as it was in the days of Noah, so it was in all ages, both before and since; Christ still caused some or other, and moved them by his Spirit, to call upon men to repent, and turn to God. This he did by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the patriarchs; by Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, David, and all the prophets: Their great business was, not only to foretel things to come, but to tell men of their sins, and call them to repentance: As, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord,* saith the prophet Isaiah, chap. lv. ver. 7. *Return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good,* saith the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xviii. ver. 11. *Repent, and turn your selves from all your transgressions,* saith the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xviii. ver. 30. *Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor,* saith the prophet Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, ch. iv. ver. 27. *Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God,* saith the prophet Joel, chap. ii. ver. 13. And thus all along in the old testament, Christ was always calling sinners to repentance by his holy Spirit in the prophets, before he came himself into the world.

AND when the fulness of time was near expired, that he himself was publickly to appear among men in their own nature, he sent John the baptist before, to prepare the way for him, by preaching the same doctrine, and saying, *Repent ye, for the kingdom*

kingdom of heaven is at hand, Mat. iii. 2. This was the sum and substance of all he preached; and by this he prepared the way so effectual for Christ, that he no sooner appeared, but many were rightly disposed, and ready to receive him: For which end he himself also, so soon as he was baptiz'd, and had after his fasting forty days, overcome the devil, and then set about the great work he came about, having heard that *John* was cast into prison, the first thing he did was to *call sinners to repentance*, in the very same words that his forerunner had done. For St. *Matthew*, having described his baptism, and his fasting in the wilderness, and *John's* imprisonment, saith, *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Mat. iv. 17. To the same purpose St. *Mark* saith, *That after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel*: Mark i. 14, 15. And as this was the first, so it was the great doctrine he insisted on all along. Neither did he only do it himself where-soever he was, but he sent out his twelve apostles also to preach the same doctrine in other places: For they having received their orders and commission from him, it is said, *They went out and preached, that men should repent*, Mark vi. 12. So that all the while, from the time of his appearing publickly in the world, to his going out of it again, he was doing the work he came about, even *calling sinners to repentance* with his own mouth; and for a great while by his apostles, whom he sent out for that purpose: And what great effect his calling had upon those who heard it, appears from the multitudes that were converted by it; for altho *John* the baptist had very many, yet it is said, *That Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John*; John iv. 1.

AND as our blessed Saviour thus called sinners to repentance, while he lived; so after he was dead, and risen again, he order'd the same still to be done in his name: For appearing to his apostles after his resurrection, he said unto them, among other things, *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*; Luke xxiv. 47. And that his apostles might have power to do it, he immediately before his ascension into heaven, gave them full commission, saying, *Go ye therefore, and teach, or make all nations my disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*; Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. Where we may observe, that as he commands and impowers his apostles to preach to all nations to repent, and turn to him, that they might become his disciples, and keep his laws; so he promiseth, that he himself would be always with them in the doing it: And not only with them who were then in being, but with their successors to the end of the world. And therefore whensoever any, by virtue of this commission, call sinners to repentance, he, being present with them, is the principal agent in it: It is he that doth it by them; otherwise their doing it, tho in his name, and by his authority, would signify nothing; whereas he himself being always present, and influencing what they did by his own almighty power, we know what glorious success they have had in persuading whole nations to repent and submit to him.

IN obedience therefore to the command, and confidence in the promise, which Christ had given them, the apostles went about the world, preaching repentance in his name: *Repent*, saith St. *Peter*, *and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ*, Acts ii. 38. And again, *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*, Acts iii. 19. And when Christ had called *Saul* with his own mouth, he presently went forth, and shewed both to the *Jews and Gentiles*, that *they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance*; Acts xxvi. 20.

By these, with the rest of the apostles, and others, whom Christ sent out for that purpose, his faith was soon planted in most parts of the known world: Because whithersoever they went, he still went along with them; and made use of them only as his instruments, whereby to *call sinners to repentance*. It was still he himself that did it.

So it hath been all along; and so it is at this day: We who have the honour to be admitted into so much of the apostolical office, as to preach Christ's word unto you, we do not do it in our own name, but his; neither are we any more than instruments in his hand: It is he who calls you to repentance by us. For as the apostle saith, *We are ambassadors for Christ, as tho God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*; 2 Cor. v. 20. And therefore, when we

come unto you in Christ's name, and preach his word, you must *receive it, not as the word of men, but* (as it is in truth) *the word of God*, 1 Thes. ii. 13. and always remember what our great Master said to his apostles, and in them to such as should succeed them in preaching his word, *He that beareth you, beareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me*, Luke x. 16. From whence it is plain, that Christ himself speaks by us; and therefore you had need have a care how you hear. For when we call upon you to perform any duty, it is Christ himself that requires you to do it. When we preach repentance to you, it is he that calls you to it: this being the ordinary means settled in his church, whereby he always did, and still doth, call sinners to repentance.

AND if so, What a sad account will many here present have to give to him at the last day? How often hath he called upon you to repent, and yet you will not do it? How often hath he used me, the unworthiest of all his ministers, to advise you, to pray you in his stead, to beseech you, to require you in his name to be constant in the use of those means which he hath appointed for your obtaining grace and salvation by him? And yet (I speak it with grief and sorrow of heart) there are but very few will be persuaded to it: Insomuch, that we have just cause to fear, that those very means which Christ designed for your salvation, will prove to many (I dread to speak it!) the means of their greater damnation. Howsoever, I must do my duty, and leave the issue to him that sent me.

IN his name therefore I pray and beseech; or rather not I, but Jesus Christ himself; Jesus Christ, your only Mediator and Redeemer; Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you; Jesus Christ, who came into the world on purpose to save sinners: He calls upon all sinners, particularly those who are here present, he calls upon them all to repent; all that have hitherto lived in any, either open or secret sin; all that have lived in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, or the pride of life; all that have lived in ignorance or infidelity, in gluttony or drunkenness, or in any sort of debauchery and profaneness; all that have lived in schisms or heresy, in faction, sedition, or rebellion against their lawful governors in church or state; all that have lived in envy, hatred, or malice against their neighbours; all that have lived in theft or robbery, in oppression or extortion, in covetousness, cheating or defrauding others, without making them full restitution; all that have lived in sloth and idleness, spending their time in vain, and to no purpose; all that have lived in undutifulness to their parents, uncharitableness to the poor, or in censoriousness, backbiting, and speaking evil of their brethren; all that have lived in swearing, lying, perjury, or taking God's holy name any way in vain; all that have lived in the profanation of the Lord's-day, doing their own work, and not the duties required on it; all that have lived in superstition or idolatry, worshipping any other than the true God, or not worshipping him as they ought; all that have lived in the love, desire, trust, or fear of any thing in the world, more than of him that made or governs it; all that have lived in the neglect of their publick or private devotions to him, and so as without God in the world; all that have lived without the pale of Christ's church, by not being baptized into it, according to his institution; all that have lived in the neglect of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, not receiving it at all, or at least seldom or never, when they can find any thing else to do; all that have lived in presumption, or unbelief, in the contempt of God's threatenings, or in the despair of the mercy which he hath promised in the gospel: These, and if there be any other sort of sinners among you, Jesus Christ now calls them all to repentance: He now calls upon all, and every one to leave off your sins; to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; to do unto others, as ye would have others do to you; to love the Lord your God with all your hearts, and your neighbours as yourselves; to live as those who are none of your own, but are bought with a price, and therefore to glorify God both in your body and in your Spirit, which are his: In short, he calls upon you to believe whatsoever he hath taught, to rely upon whatsoever he hath promised, and to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded you.

Now seeing Christ hath thus called you all to repentance, let me advise you in his name to do it; and to do it now, as not knowing whether he will ever call you any more. There is none in the world can save you but he; and he will never do it, except ye repent: and that's the reason why he calls upon you to do it. And if ye will not hearken to his call, hearken I pray you to what he will say to you;

Because I called, and ye refused, I have stretched forth my hand, and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you; as it most certainly will e'er long, Prov. i. 24—27. Whereas, if ye will hearken to his call, so as to repent and turn to God, I assure you in his name, that he will receive you into his care and protection; he'll wash you from your sins with his own blood: he'll assist, direct, and bless you while you live, and then give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith, that is in him:

To whom, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N LXXXV.

Repentance, a certain, and the only method of obtaining pardon.

ISAIAH lx. 7.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

ALTHO there be nothing in the world that men are generally addicted to, so much as sin; yet there is nothing which they have or can have, more real cause to detest and hate, than it; it being that which hath deprived them of the highest happiness, and plunged into the deepest misery that any creature is capable of. For whereas nothing could be more pure and perfect, nothing more holy and happy, than man was when he first came out of his Creator's hands, sin hath now so depraved all the faculties of his soul, so distemper'd all the members of his body, and so deformed the whole man, that now nothing can be more loathsome and hideous, nothing more wretched and miserable, than he; and by consequence, than every one of us by nature is. For if we take a serious survey of our selves, we may easily discover how sin hath so blinded our minds, corrupted our judgments, distracted our thoughts, perverted our wills, disordered our affections, and so debauched all our words and actions, that it hath incensed God against us, and brought all the curses of his law, and the effects of his displeasure upon us; whereby we who were designed for the most happy, are become the most miserable creatures upon earth, subject continually not only to pains and aches in our bodies, cares and fears in our minds, and

and to grief and trouble in our hearts; but even to the wrath of God, to horreur of conscience, and to all the tortures and torments that either our soul or body is able to undergo.

THIS therefore is the sad and miserable condition that sin hath brought us all into; neither is there any other way imaginable, whereby any of us can be freed from this our misery, unless sin, which is the cause of it, be first taken away: For so long as we continue guilty of sin, we are still obnoxious to all the punishments which it doth deserve. *But if our transgressions be forgiven, and our sins cover'd,* we cannot but be bless'd, because God himself hath said we are so. *Psal. xxxii. 1.* And therefore it must needs be our wisdom to study all arts and means that we can possibly find out, to get our sins pardon'd, and so our obligations to misery and punishment disannull'd. For this end therefore, it will be necessary to consult the word of God, to understand what he would have us do in order to so great an end: for seeing none can pardon our sins but he against whom they are committed, none but he can tell us upon what account he will pardon them.

AND verily, all circumstances considered, it is one of the greatest mysteries in the world, that God should pardon our sins upon any account at all; neither could we in reason have expected it, if he had not promis'd it to us. For I wonder upon what account we should think, that the great Creator of the world should put up those injuries, that we silly worms, that live upon him, have presum'd to commit against him. Alas! he is never the better for all our services, nor the worse for all our sins; and therefore, what need he concern himself about us, so as to promise us pardon and acceptance upon any account whatsoever? The devils or fallen angels, were once as glorious creatures as man ever was: But them God hath pass'd by, and hath taken no more notice of them, than if they had not been his creatures; but still suffers them to languish in their sins, yea hath condemn'd them to eternal torments, without any hope of mercy, or promise of pardon, however for the future they shall carry and behave themselves. And how can we expect, that he should have any more regard to us, than he hath had to them? They are his creatures as well as we, and our sins have deserv'd as much as theirs. What ground therefore can we have, to look for pardon more than they? Questionless, if we look upon ourselves only, they are every whit as worthy of mercy, as we either are, or can be. But only God of his infinite goodness towards us particularly, for which we can give no reason but his own good pleasure, hath been pleas'd to have pity and compassion upon us, tho not on them; and that upon such easy and reasonable terms, that we could never in reason have desired better: For what doth he say? Only, *Let the wicked forsake his way, &c.*

These words therefore containing the terms or conditions to be perform'd by us, in reference to the pardon of our sins, and by consequence to our eternal happiness, it is your interest to understand, and my duty to explain, the full meaning of them to you. Now whatsoever is necessary to be known from these words, may be reduc'd to these heads.

- I. WHO is the wicked and unrighteous man here spoken of.
- II. How he should forsake his ways and thoughts.
- III. How turn again unto the Lord.
- IV. WHAT encouragement he hath to do so. Or, how God will be merciful unto him, and multiply his pardons.

I. WHO is the wicked or unrighteous man here spoken of? A question easy to be resolv'd. For we need not go far to find out such a man. There are too many of them, I fear, amongst us at this very time. Nay, there is never a one amongst us but hath cause to suspect himself to be the man. And therefore when God in scripture, or I from him, speak of wicked and unrighteous men, do not you shuffle it off from yourselves, and think that you are not concern'd, but rather suspect yourselves to be the persons. As when our Saviour said, that one of his apostles should betray him, every one presently cry'd out, *Lord, is it I?* So when we speak of wicked and unrighteous men, every one should say within himself, *Am not I the man now spoken of?* When God saith, *Let the wicked forsake his way,* doth he not mean me? Or rather every one of you being conscious to himself of his own sins should make no question of it, but conclude himself to be the man whom God here calls upon. And let me tell you, every person amongst you, that

doth not thus apply what is said to himself, had as good be out of the church as in it; it being impossible that you should receive any benefit from what you hear, if you think not yourselves concern'd in it: For what will it signify for me to tell you, that you must forsake your sins, unless you believe that you have some sins which you must forsake? Or to speak of pardon to them, that think they need it not, tho others do? It is this general hearing of sermons that makes them so ineffectual, and is, and hath been, the ruin of millions of souls. But to prevent this at present, I shall give a few characters of such persons whom God here calls wicked and unrighteous men; or men of iniquity, as the original phrase imports. And if any here present can truly say, that they are no such persons, then let them put off what is said from themselves, and fancy that it belongs only unto others. But I fear, that if you will deal faithfully with yourselves, none of you but must be forc'd to smite upon his breast, and say, what have I done! I am that wicked and unrighteous man or woman that must forsake my ways, and return unto the Lord, that so I may find mercy and pardon at his gracious hands.

1. FOR you were all born in sin, and brought forth in iniquity: Or, as *David* saith of himself, *You were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did your mothers conceive you*, Psal. li. 5. And therefore you are all *by nature the children of wrath*, as well as others, *Eph. ii. 3.* That is, you contracted that guilt by coming through the loins of your sinful parents; for which thou wert obliged to suffer death so soon as born; only God of his infinite mercy hath been pleased hitherto to reprieve you. But because execution is deferred, it doth not follow that you were not condemned, nay less, that you are not guilty. No, no; you are all born sinners, both guilty of, and defiled with sin, naturally averse from good, and inclined to evil: And therefore however civil and orderly you may be in your life and conversation, tho you be as innocent as the child new-born, or as yourselves were when you came first into the world; yet your very original sin, and natural corruption, is sufficient to denominate you wicked and unrighteous; for you are still in your sins.

2. ESPECIALLY if you live in any known sin, so as constantly to commit, or indulge yourselves in it. For every wicked man hath some wicked way or other which he walketh in; and therefore, saith the prophet, *Let the wicked forsake his way*. And thus the prophet *Jeremiah* speaking to the wicked saith, *Turn ye now every one from your evil way, and from the evil of your doings*, Jer. xxv. 5. implying, that every evil man hath some evil way or other that he walks in; and every one that walketh in any evil way, is an evil or wicked man. And who is there amongst us that doth not walk in one evil way or other? Yea, that doth not live in the daily practice of some known sin, or in the constant neglect of some known duty? What though thou beest no drunkard, no adulterer, no thief, no swearer; art thou therefore no sinner? Are they all the sins thou canst be guilty of, or defiled with? Mistake not thy self. A man may be free from all those sins, as to the actual commission of them, and yet be as great a sinner, as wicked a man, as any is in the world besides. Though thou beest not overtaken with drunkenness, thou mayest be with the cares of the world. And though thy heart burn not with lust, it may be inflamed with passion, malice or revenge. And what though thou takest not another's purse, thou mayest take away his good name; which questionless, is as great or greater a theft than the other is: Forasmuch as *a good name is better than riches*, as the wise man tells us, *Prov. xvii. 1.* And besides that, thou mayest rob a man in thy shop, as well as upon the high-way; by secret cheating, as well as by open setting upon him. And what though you do harm to none, do you do good to all? Certainly it is your duty to do good to all, as well as to do harm to none that you converse withal. And therefore it is a great mistake to think that you are not wicked, because you think yourselves to be morally honest; or that there is no sin which you need forsake, because there are some which you do not actually commit. And therefore, though you be not so dissolute and debauch'd persons as some are, do not therefore think that you have no sin to turn from. I accuse none, but leave every one to accuse himself, and to consider whether he doth not live in some known sin, and by consequence is that wicked person spoken of in my text, who must forsake his way, and return unto the Lord, that he may find mercy with him.

3. THOUGH you live not in the actual commission of any known sin, yet if you still retain love to it, and desires after it, you are yet in your sins, and so the wicked

ked or unrighteous spoken of in my text. It is true, the pharisees, and many of the heathens too, did generally think, that the inward irregularities of the heart, and purposes to sin, which never break forth into acts, are not liable to be punished by God himself, no more than by man. But that is directly contrary to the word of God, which still asserts the law of God to be a spiritual law; and therefore takes as much cognizance of the inward motions of the will, as of the outward actions of the life; and commands us not to covet or desire, as well as not to steal our neighbours goods; not to think, as well as not to do any harm against them; and to keep not only our hands, and mouths, but our very *hearts too, with all diligence*, Prov. iv. 23. And to *abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*, 1 Pet. ii. 11. And therefore, although thou be'st blameless and unspotted as to thy outward life and conversation, so that none can say, black is thine eye, as to any gross sin; yet know, that God pondereth thy heart, and ransacketh every corner of thy soul, and observes the motions of those very lusts that war within thee, and prevail against thee. Though no man can, yet God sees the blindness of thy mind, the errors of thy judgment, the pride of thy heart, the perverseness of thy will, the unruliness of thy passions, the corruption of thy conscience, the irregularities and disorders of each affection. And as others are termed wicked from their outward debaucheries, God can call thee so from these secret impieties and enormities, which none are acquainted with but he and thine own conscience.

AND therefore, however civil and courteous you may be in your behaviour, however just and honest in your dealings, however free and liberal to the poor, however reverent and devout in your approaches to God; yet if after all this your heart be not right with him, nor your souls inclined to him, you are still in the number of those whom he here calls the wicked and unrighteous. So that all things rightly consider'd, there is not a soul here present, but hath just cause to look upon himself as the person whom God here speaks to, saying, *Let the wicked forsake his way.*

2. How should the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts? A question that deserves your serious attention. For you must not think, that every forsaking of sin, is that forsaking it which God requires in order to pardon. For I suppose there may be many here present, who do not now live in those sins which heretofore they were addicted to: and yet they may not have forsaken their sins, but their sins have forsaken them. You cannot, and therefore no wonder that you do not, commit them. Or you may forsake your sins, merely for fear of shame, or temporal punishments: which is but a sinful forsaking of sin; yea, itself is a sin to be forsaken, because it argues, that you fear shame or punishment more than God, and love and prefer yourselves before him, in that you will do that for your own sakes, which you will not do for his; and you will avoid some sin to secure yourselves from punishment, when you will not do it in obedience to God's command, or for fear of his displeasure.

NOR but that it is lawful to have an eye to the punishments which are the just deserts of sin, and commonly the first motive against it: For certainly God would never have threatened so many temporal punishments against sinners, but to deter them from their sins, Jer. xviii. 11. But if the fear of temporal punishments be the principal or only reason that keeps thee from thy sins, it is manifest that thou lovest them still, and retainest them in thy heart, though thou dar'st not actually commit them. And therefore, although the consideration of the temporal evils, which generally attend sin, may lawfully give the first occasion of your forsaking it; yet you must not stay there, but proceed upon higher and more noble grounds than that is, or else you cannot be said properly to forsake sin. Which notwithstanding that you may do, give me leave to use the most proper and genuine arguments to prevail with you to do it; that you may not only forsake your sins, but so forsake them as to obtain a pardon for them.

1. CONSIDER, that there is never a sin you do or can commit, but it is contrary to the nature, and offensive to the majesty of God himself: Which, if rightly consider'd, would be more prevalent with you, and more forcible upon you, than all external punishments in the world. Alas! What is sword or famine; what is plague or sickness; what is shame, or poverty, or death itself, in comparison of the anger and displeasure of the Lord of hosts? Who with a frown, or an angry look, can command us into hell, and torment us there; for it is nothing but his frowns

that makes hell-flames. So that as his gracious presence makes the joys of heaven, so do the presence of his anger and indignation make the very torments of hell, *2 Thes. i. 7, 8.* And therefore, so long as God is angry with thee, however rich or happy thou may'st think thyself, thou art in hell though thou knowest it not; and there is nothing wanting to consummate thy misery, but the apprehensions of thy sad condition. For didst thou but see how much the eternal God is displeased with thee, and frowns upon thee, thou wouldst not be able to endure thyself, but horror and confusion would overwhelm thee.

THIS, this therefore should be the principal cause that should make us loath our sins, even because God loaths them. And we should therefore forsake them, because otherwise God will forsake us, being angry and offended at us. Thus we find *David* troubled for this especially, that his sin was committed against God; *Psal. li. 4, 5.* And in the parable of the prodigal son, tho his straits were the first occasion of his coming to himself; yet his having offended God was the principal motive of his return to his father; *Luke xv. 21.* And whosoever amongst you shall be thus displeased with your sins, because God is displeased at them, and therefore forsake them because they offend him; such forsake them so as is required in my text, in order to their pardon.

2. CONSIDER sin is the transgression of God's law, and upon that account should be forsaken, even because of its contrariety and repugnancy to so holy and just a law as that is. This is to forsake sin for its own sake; not only because it is of dangerous consequence, but because it is sin. This is that which made the reliques of his sins so grievous and irksome to *St. Paul*, because *the law was spiritual, and he was carnal, sold under sin*; *Rom. vii. 12, 13, 14.* And this is that which should make us both loath and leave our sins, because they are repugnant to so exact a rule, so divine a law as God's is. And whosoever forsakes his sins upon this account, need not fear but he shall find mercy, according to the promise in my text.

3. CONSIDER how much ingratitude there is in every sin; I say, ingratitude, which itself was always look'd upon as one of the greatest absurdities that a man can be guilty of. But if our ingratitude to men be so, what shall we call ingratitude against God? Questionless there is no word to be found in any language, whereby to express the heinousness of it. And yet in every sin, there is not only rebellion against God, as he is our dread and all-glorious Sovereign; but there is ingratitude against him too, as he is our good and all-gracious Father: Which he himself makes use of as a great aggravation of our sins, *2 Sam. xii. 7, 8. Isa. i. 3. chap. v. 2, 3, 4. Deut. xxxii. 6.* And this verily is that which should make us all ashamed of our selves, and blush at each remembrance of ourselves; that we have been so desperately sinful against God, notwithstanding that he hath been so infinitely merciful unto us; that we should live continually upon him, and yet live continually against him; that we should have nothing but what we receive from his mercy, and yet do nothing but what is offensive to his Majesty: Oh perverse and ungrateful generation! Do we thus requite the Lord for all the mercies that we have received from him? Is this all the recompence we give him for his creation and continual preservation of us? Oh shameful ingratitude! The very thoughts whereof should make us even loath and abhor ourselves, and resolve for the future against sin, because it is sin, an offence to God's glory, repugnancy to his laws, and the height of ingratitude in the very abstract.

CONSIDER these things, O all ye that have hitherto indulged your selves in any known sin, and tell me, whether you have any reason to be so loth to part with your sins: What pleasure, what profit, what good did you ever find in them, that may countervail their evil and malignity? Can there be any pleasure in displeasing God? Any profit in losing your own souls? Or any good in evil itself? Certainly there can be none: And therefore be advised for your own good, to bid adieu this day to all your sins; harbour these spiritual vipers no longer in your breast, but whatsoever you know to be offensive unto God, let it be so to you. Make no longer a trade of sin, nor walk in the paths that lead to ruin; but forsake both your former ways and thoughts, neither practising sin in your lives, nor indulging it in your hearts; but turn ye, turn from all your evil ways, to serve the living God, and you need not fear but you will find grace and favour at his righteous hands, according to my text, *Let the wicked forsake his way.*

BUT

BUT you must not think, that every forsaking of sin hath pardon entailed upon it, but such only whereby we so leave our sins as to cleave to God: For it is not enough to go out of *Egypt*, unless we enter into *Canaan*. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; and therefore it is here said, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord*: So that as sin is the *terminus a quo*, God must be the *terminus ad quem*, in our conversion. It is sin that we must turn from, and it is God we must turn to, otherwise all our turnings will signify nothing. *They return*, saith the prophet, *but not to the most High, they are as a deceitful bow*; Hosea vii. 16. implying, that this is but a deceitful conversion, that as a deceitful bow will never hit the mark, nor accomplish what they aim at. And verily the want of knowing or considering this hath been the ruin and downfall of many in *Israel*; who forsaking the sins which formerly they lived in, presently conclude themselves to be real converts; whereas there are several ways whereby a man may turn from his former sins, and yet remain as sinful as formerly he was, or howsoever be far from returning to the Lord, so as to find favour and acceptance with him.

FOR, 1st, a man may turn from one sin to another, from an open to a secret, from a publick to a private, from a bodily to a spiritual sin: As, heretofore, perhaps, thou hast been a prophane and debauched wretch; but now being turn'd from thy profaneness and debauchery, that thou art self conceited, and righteous in thine own eyes, and so art turned from bad to worse, from a publican to a pharisee, from an open sinner to a mock-saint; and so art in a worse condition than thou wast before: For, *seest thou a man wise*, as the wise man saith, or *righteous in his own eyes*; *there is more hopes of a fool than of him*.

THUS there are too many amongst us, who from prodigal become covetous, from adulterers go a whoring after the idols of this world, from swearing turn to lying, from drunkenness to censoriousness, and from intemperance to pride and self-conceitedness. And questionless these and such like sins which they turn to, are every whit as bad or worse than those which they turned from: And therefore this is no forsaking sin in general, but only some particular sins; or rather, it is no forsaking sin at all, but exchanging of one sin for another, and often of a great one for a greater; as our Saviour intimates in the parable of the unclean spirit, *Mat. xii. 45*.

NEITHER, in the next place, is it enough to turn from a sinful to a mere civil course of life. Though this be a great conversion in the world's account, it is not so in God's: For generally such an external change as this proceeds from some unsound principle, or some inferior cause or other. Thus, fear of poverty may make a prodigal turn a good husband, and fear or sickness may force the intemperate man to become sober; and the fear of one external punishment or other makes many a man forbear the actual commission of those sins which otherwise he could willingly indulge himself in; and therefore this can be no true conversion, because it is grounded upon false principles. And though it makes some alteration in a man's life, yet it makes none in his heart; inwardly he is as bad as ever. Though he may refrain from the external commission of his former sins, yet he still retaineth love and affection for them: Or if he doth not, but really loaths as well as leaves his sins; yea, so as to arrive at the highest pitch of civility that ever the most specious moralist was adorned withal; to such a man we may say, as our Saviour said to the young man in the gospel, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven*, but yet thou art from it, *one thing thou lackest*: Thou must not only eschew evil, but do good; not only avoid whatsoever God hath forbidden, but thou must perform too whatsoever he hath commanded: Thou must not only forsake thy sins, but return unto the Lord.

NAY, Lastly, A man may go much higher yet, and yet come short of true conversion: As those do, who having lived wicked and debauched lives, and after being pricked in their conscience for their former sins, and overladen with their weight and burden, presently set upon an austere and reserved way of living amongst men, and some superstitious exercise of religion towards God; thinking, by this means, to make God amends for the injuries they have formerly committed against him. But this is but a reeling from one extreme to another, and that which hath been the ruin of many souls: As our Saviour plainly sheweth; where speaking of the severe sect of the pharisees, he saith, that *when they had made any proselyte*; that is, turned a publican, or an harlot, or some such wicked person,

person, to their austere and superstitious way of living; *they made him two times more a child of wrath than themselves*, Mat. xxiii. 15. Yet this is that which is so much mistaken for conversion amongst us; yea, and amongst the papists too, who speak and boast much of such kind of converts as these are: who having lived many years in gross sins, afterwards being weary of them, to make satisfaction, as they think, for their former lives, undertake some tedious pilgrimage, or else enter into a monastery, and admit themselves into some religious order, and there spend the rest of their time in whippings and scourgings, in a constant repetition of so many *Pater-nosters* and *Ave-Maria's* every day. And this is that which the papists call religion; and therefore these houses are called religious houses; these orders, religious orders; and such persons, religious persons, and true converts: Whereas a man may do all this, and yet be as far from God as ever; for this is not that which God requires of us in our conversion, and therefore looks not upon us as converted because we do it. What cares he for the scourging of our bodies? It is the mortifying our lusts which he calls for. Neither doth he matter all the sacrifices and oblations that you can make him, so much as one sincere act of obedience to his laws; *Micah* vi. 6, 7, 8.

HE therefore that would so turn unto the Lord, as to find mercy with him, must not turn from one sin to another, or from one sect to another, or from one religion to another only; but he must turn from all his sins, from all his former ways and thoughts, and must *return unto the Lord with all his heart*, Joel ii. 12. that is, our hearts must be wholly inclined to God, and our souls be offered up as a whole-burnt-offering unto him, without any mental reservation, or hypocritical equivocations with him. We must not halt between two opinions, nor admit of any corival with God in our affections: for unless we give him all, we give him none: For how can there be any communion betwixt light and darkness? Or what agreement can there be betwixt Christ or *Belial*, or betwixt God and sin in the same heart? Be not deceived, God will not be mocked. Neither must you think to put him off with fair pretences, and outward shews; or with part, instead of the whole, that is due unto him: Neither will he look upon you as returning to him at all, if you leave any part of your hearts behind you, or bring any sin whatsoever along with you. But if you would return to him, you must leave all things else to close with him; you must be as much averse from sin, and inclined to God, as you have formerly been averse from God, and inclined to sin. And this is true conversion indeed; when the whole soul is taken off from all things else, and fixed only upon him that made them; then all the affections, which before were scattered amongst the creatures, meet and center only in God: And so yours all must do, if you desire to return to him.

FIRST, Your love must not only be abated, but extinguished unto all things else besides him, so as to love nothing above him, nothing against him, nothing equal to him, nothing at all in comparison of him: For we are commanded to love him with all our hearts and strength; so as to let nothing share with him in this affection, nor reserve any corner of our hearts wherein to lodge any thing besides him; *Deut.* vi. 5. Yea, our highest affection for other things should be as hatred, rather than love, in comparison of our love to him; *Luke* xiv. 26. And all the reason in the world for it. For seeing we love nothing but because it is good, we must needs love him above all things because he is the chiefest good: Yea, nothing is good in comparison of him, and therefore nothing ought to be loved in comparison of him. And therefore, if you would return unto the Lord, you must loosen your hearts from all things else, and fix them only upon him; loving him with that exceeding and transcendent love, as to suffer nothing to come into opposition against, no nor in competition with him in this affection.

AND as your love is, so should your desires be inclined to him, and him alone; which is indeed but the natural consequent of the former: for what we love, we cannot but desire; yea, and our desires of a thing are always proportionable to our love unto it. And therefore he that loves God above all things, cannot but desire him above all things too; so as as to say with the Psalmist, *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* *Psal.* lxxiii. 25. And thus if you would return to the Lord with all your hearts, you must get above the world, and look down upon all things here below, as low and despicable nothings in comparison of God; so as to make him the only object of your soul's desires, and the only center wherein your inclinations rest.

AND your love being thus inflamed towards him, and your desires thus carried after him, your joy cannot but be placed in him: For as we cannot but desire what

we love, so we cannot but rejoice in what we do desire, so far as we do enjoy it. And therefore, we in vain pretend to be converted, until we find more solid joy and real pleasure, in drawing nigh to God, and enjoying communion with him, than in any thing, or all the things in the world besides. For so long as we take pleasure in any thing more than him, or as much as in him, it is that which we prefer before him, and therefore are not as yet returned to him.

AND as we are to abstract our love, desire, and joy from all things else, to fix them upon God as the supreme good; so also must we make him our only trust and confidence, so as to expect nothing from any thing else, but only from him who made and disposeth all things: For so long as we make flesh our arm, and stay upon creature-helps, we plainly demonstrate that we are still settled and fix'd on them, and by consequence are not returned from them unto the Lord, *Psal.* xx. 7, 8.

BUT we must still remember so to trust on the power and mercy, as to fear the glory and majesty of the Lord. We are to sanctify him, by making him our fear and our dread, as well as by making him our stay and refuge. For he that feareth any thing as much or more than God, attributes more power to that than he doth to God: He doth not rightly believe him to be above all things, and therefore it is that he doth not fear him more than all things; which whosoever doth not, is still entangled amongst the creatures, and by consequence not returned to the Lord.

THUS whensoever any soul is truly converted, all its affections return from the creature unto God. What before he loved, now he hates; what before he desired, now he detesteth; what before he made his pleasure, is now his grief; what before he trusted on, he now derides; and what before he fears, he now contemns, in comparison of the Lord. From whence it also follows, that his life and conversation must needs be changed too: For a man's life and actions are both moved and influenced by his will and affections; as he affects, so generally he acteth: And therefore he that loves God's person, cannot but obey his precepts; he that desires his favour, must needs labour to get and keep it; he that rejoices in his presence, is grieved for any thing that offends him; he that trusteth on his promises, cannot but observe the conditions which he requires; and he that feareth his sovereignty, dares not transgress those laws which he hath been pleased to prescribe. And therefore our conversion unto God, is necessarily accompanied with sincere and universal obedience to his laws; insomuch that none of you can be said to be returned to the Lord, that wilfully live in the commission of any one sin which you know the Lord hath forbidden, or in the wilful neglect of any one duty which you know that he hath commanded.

WOULD you therefore understand in few terms, what it is to return unto the Lord: In short, it is nothing else but this; so to love God's person, as to desire his favour; so to desire his favour, as to rejoice in his presence; so to rejoice in his presence, as to trust on his promises; so to trust on his promises, as to fear his threatnings; and so to fear his threatnings, as to do whatsoever he hath commanded. But then you'll say, who is sufficient for these things? So say I too, But howsoever, do but you do what really you can, and you need not fear but God will enable you to do the rest: For it never yet was known, nor ever will be, that he ever failed any one that sincerely did what they could to serve him; and therefore, do but you do as much as you are able, and God will enable you to do as much as you need. And certainly you have the highest encouragements imaginable, to use the utmost of your power in a matter that doth so nearly concern you, as this doth; considering, that if you thus forsake your sins, and return unto the Lord, he will have mercy upon you, and abundantly pardon.

1. HE will have mercy upon you; that is, he will not be like offended mortals, who having received an injury, are implacable, so that no submission or satisfaction will content them; but God, upon your turning to him, will turn to you, he will not exercise the severity of his justice upon you, but his bowels will yearn with pity and compassion towards you: So that if you do but throw down the weapons whereby you have fought and rebelled against the King of heaven, and become his loyal subjects for the future; altho his law hath condemned you for rebellious, and ye have hitherto been in continual danger of having it executed upon you; yet now, upon your repentance and conversion, he will manifest his mercy towards you, not only by taking off your obligations to punishment, and granting

you a reprieve, but by receiving you too into his grace and favour, being as fully reconciled to you, as if he had never been offended by you.

BUT you'll say, how can we be sure of this? How can we expect, that so just and glorious a being as God is, should ever be reconciled to such obstinate and rebellious creatures as we have been against him? Alas! we deserve each moment to be tumbled headlong into the abyss of misery, for our manifold and great transgressions: How then can we expect ever to find mercy at the righteous hands of God, whom we have so grievously offended?

TO that I answer; it is true, there is nothing that we can do, that can merit any favour at his hands; and if we look no farther than ourselves, our condition is desperate, and our misery unavoidable. Neither can we see any reason imaginable in ourselves, wherefore he that made us should have any mercy upon us; he having been so frequently affronted, despised and injured by us, as he hath been: Yet howsoever, for reasons best known to himself, drawn certainly out of his own intrinsick and essential goodness, he hath been pleased not only to promise us by word of mouth, but to give it under his hand too, That if the wicked forsake his way, and return to the Lord, he will have mercy upon him; and that if we turn to him, he will turn to us, *Zech. i. 3.* And, that if we repent and turn, Iniquity shall not be our ruin, but we shall surely live, *Ezek. xviii. 30, 31, 32.* Thus also he expostulates the case with us as pathetically, with as much affection and earnestness, as ever tender father did with his rebellious son, *Ezek. xxxiii. 11.* Hence it is that he calls upon us so earnestly, and invites us to come unto him, that our souls may live, *Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3.* Neither doth he call thus upon us by his prophets only, but also by his only Son, *Mat. xi. 28, 29.* Who also hath promised, that those that come to him, he will in no wise cast out, *John vi. 37.*

TELL me now, my brethren, how would God have expressed his desire of your happiness, and his readiness to receive you, more clearly and more pathetically, than he hath done? And what can you desire more than the word of truth itself, to assure you of mercy, if you will but turn; especially, seeing God hath not only said it, but seal'd it too with the blood of his only Son, who is able to save to the uttermost all those that turn and come unto him? *Heb. vii. 25.* And that nothing might deter you, or keep you off from returning to the Lord, no not the multitude nor the greatness of your former sins; he hath not only told you, that upon your repentance and conversion, he will have mercy upon you, but also that he will abundantly pardon, or, as it is in the *Hebrew*, ירבה לסלוח, *God will multiply to pardon.* As you have abundantly sinned, he will abundantly forgive your sins; as you have multiplied your offences against him, he will multiply his pardons unto you: Yea, be your sins never so many, never so great, his mercies are still both more and greater; for your sins are the sins but of finite creatures, whereas his mercies are the mercies of the infinite God, made over also, and confirmed to us, by the infinite merit and satisfaction of his only begotten Son; in whom therefore whosoever repents and turns to him, cannot but be abundantly pardoned.

THUS I have endeavoured to shew you upon what grounds and terms we may expect pardon and mercy at the hands of God, even upon our repentance of all our sins, and true conversion to the Lord: Not as if God would therefore pardon our sins, because we repent of them; or turn to us, because we turn to him: But Christ having made satisfaction for our sins, whosoever repent and are converted, God is pleased to accept of his death in lieu of theirs; and so upon his account, not only to discharge and acquit them from their sins, but also to receive them into grace and favour. And all that he requireth of us, in order to the application of Christ's merit to us, and by consequence to the reinstating us in that happiness which we have lost and forfeited by our sins, is only to forsake our sins, and turn again unto the Lord. And therefore I hope that I need not use any arguments to persuade you to repentance and conversion; your own interest, one would think, being enough to prompt you to it. I am sure there is none of you but must needs be sensible, that you have done many things which you ought not to do, and have not done many things which you ought to do, since you came into the world; and so are guilty of many and great offences against him that sent you hither: By which means you have forfeited your right to whatsoever is good, and are always liable to whatsoever is evil or pernicious to you; insomuch that by reason of your former sins, you are all at this very moment subject to the wrath of God, with all its dismal consequences, and in danger of hell and

and eternal damnation. How you may prevent and escape this your deserved misery, hath been the subject of this day's discourse; wherein I have discovered upon what account God will have mercy upon you, and pardon your sins; even if you forsake your sins, and turn again unto the Lord. And therefore such amongst you as matter not whether your sins be pardoned or no, you may still continue in them, and take what follows: But if you seriously desire to have your sins forgiven, and your Maker reconciled unto you, you see upon what terms you may expect it, and what you must do that you may obtain it. There is no other remedy, you must either turn from your sins to God, or else God will never turn from his wrath to you. But if any person amongst you shall truly forsake whatsoever sins he knows himself to be guilty of, and return unto the Lord; the Lord hath said it, and he will perform it, that *he will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon.*

S E R M O N LXXXVI.

Repentance, the only method of escaping temporal Judgments.

Preached on the anniversary Fast for the fire of London.

JOHN V. 14.

Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

THERE are many, I believe, here present at this time, who this day seventeen years saw this great city all in a flame; the merciless element of fire raging so furiously in it, that maugre all the art and industry that men could use, in a few days reduced much the greatest part of the city into ashes, and made the whole a dreadful and astonishing instance of divine vengeance. It is true, there is nothing doth or can happen in the world, without God's special providence; it is his hand that orders and disposeth all things, according to his own will and pleasure. But of this we may say, as the magicians were forced to say of the plagues of Egypt, *This is the finger of God*; Exod. viii. 19. Whatsoever inferior causes might concur towards the raising or fomenting of this dreadful fire, be sure almighty God himself was the first and supreme cause; so that we may truly say, *This was the Lord's doings, and it was marvelous in our eyes.* It was he that by a long drought had prepared the city, and made it ready to take fire upon the least occasion; it was he that caused the wind to blow, and so to augment and carry the flames from one part of the city to the other; it was he that gave authority and power

power to the raging flames to force their way against, as well as before the wind; it was he that arm'd the fire with that strength and fury, that neither brick, nor stone, nor iron, nor towers, nor churches themselves were able to stand before it; it was he that caused it afterwards to cease in places most likely to be devoured by it, saying then to the fire, as he always doth to the water, *Thus far shalt thou go, and no further.* And that which is most remarkable of all, notwithstanding the general conflagration all over the city, even to the very confines in several places, yet he suffered it no where to go out of the liberties; insomuch that altho there were so many thousand houses burnt in the city, there was not so much as one burnt out of it: Which is an undeniable argument, that it was a judgment designed particularly for the city, and that it ought to be looked upon as such by all future ages. And how great a judgment it was, none can imagine so well as they that saw and felt it. Only this we may say in general, that almighty God never manifested his just displeasure and fury against any city in the world, more clearly than he did it at that time against this city, for the many and great provocations which he had observed in it.

BUT, blessed be his great name for it, in the midst of judgment he hath shewed mercy. And as he was then pleased to order the city to be destroyed for the sins of those that dwelt in it, he hath now so ordered it in his providence, that it is now rebuilt, and restored to its former, or rather to greater strength and splendour than it had before: And most of the churches too, which were then demolished, are now raised up again, and fitted for his service and worship: And, amongst the rest, this where we are now assembled, to commemorate this the just judgment of God upon this city, to bewail the sins that caused it, and to consider what to do under our present circumstances, and how we may prevent the like or greater judgments for the future: For which purpose I know no text of scripture more suitable and proper than the words I have now read, wherein our blessed Saviour forewarns a man whom he had cured of a grievous disease, which had troubled him for thirty eight years together, saying, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

THE story, which is very remarkable, in short was this: The poor man having laboured so many years under a sad distemper, with much ado got to the pool of *Bethesda*, hoping to be cured, as others were, by getting into it. There our Saviour finds him, and with a word of his mouth cures him of his distemper. After which the good man goes into the temple: What to do? Doubtless he went to give God publick thanks for his miraculous cure, and to implore his blessing and grace to improve it aright, and to live answerably to so wonderful a mercy. There our Lord meets him, as he usually doth those who come sincerely into his special presence, and gives him this divine caution, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

WHERE we may observe,

I. OUR Saviour's counsel, *Sin no more.* Thou knowest what sins thou hast hitherto lived in, for which God laid this punishment upon thee: And now thou art healed of thy disease, which was caused by thy sins, avoid those sins which were the cause of it; and not those only, but all manner of sin whatsoever: For the words are general, *Sin no more*, do nothing for the future that is offensive unto God, or contrary to his laws, but walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; but devote thy self wholly to his service, who hath been so merciful unto thee, as to restore thee to thy health and strength again.

BUT *sin no more*, may you say; how could that be required of him, or of any man, seeing it is certain that no man can live without sin in this world? For as the wise man tells us, and all men experience, *There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not*; Eccles. vii. 10. And if we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us; 1 John i. 8.

TO that I answer; it is true, no man so long as he is in the body, can be absolutely free from all sin; insomuch that he thinks that he hath no sin, sins in thinking so, and hath just cause to suspect himself to be one of the greatest of sinners, in that his mind is so blinded that he cannot, or his heart so hardened, that he will not see his own sins; and then it is no wonder, if he be guilty of all, and know it not.

YET howsoever, although we can never expect to square our lives exactly according to the rule that is set us, it is necessary the rule it self should be exact and accurate. Our Saviour doth not tell the man, that he could live without sin, but that he ought to do so. He ought to sin no more, even in a legal and strict sense:

For

For we are all obliged by the law of God to be as perfect, as free from sin, as our Lord himself was, who *did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. And in an evangelical sense, there is none of us but may, by the assistance of God's grace, avoid all manner of sin, so far as not to have any love to it, nor any delight and pleasure in it; yea, so far as not to indulge and allow our selves in it, nor to suffer it to reign and domineer over us, *Rom. vi. 12, 14*. And this is that which our Saviour's counsel and command imparts; even that the man must make it his constant care and study to forsake and avoid all manner of vice and wickedness, and to perform sincere and constant obedience to all the commands of God, to the utmost of his power and knowledge. And whosoever doth so, God for Christ's sake looks upon him as if he did not sin at all; so that he will not only pardon such a man's infirmities, but he will accept of his sincere endeavours, instead of absolute perfection, upon the account of what Christ, his Son, hath done and suffered for mankind. And in this sense, we all both ought and may so live for the future, as to perform what our Saviour here commands; even, *sin no more*.

II. HERE is the reason of our Saviour's counsel, *Lest a worse thing come unto thee*. Which implies,

I. THAT sin had been the cause of all his trouble and sickness before. This our Saviour plainly intimates to him, in that he adviseth him to prevent the like or greater judgments for the future, by sinning no more as heretofore he had done: For this plainly shews, that sin had been the sole cause of all his distempers. And so, indeed, it is of all the troubles that ever did or can befall us; we must even thank our selves, and our sins for them: For if we had never offended God, be sure he would never have afflicted us; all the afflictions which he lays upon us, being nothing else but the execution of his just displeasure for those sins that we have committed against him.

CONSIDER therefore, and bethink your selves of all the troubles, miseries or calamities, that you ever felt, or saw, or heard of in the world; and you may look upon them all as the just deserts and consequents of sin. Are mens minds ever wracked and tormented with grief and sadness? Are their bodies liable to pains and aches, to heats and colds, to maladies and distempers of all sorts, and at length to death itself? Do they meet with losses in their trade and commerce? With crosses and disappointments in their designs and projects? With fears and cares about their present estate and condition in the world? Is a fruitful land become a wilderness? A flourishing kingdom turned into an *Akeldama*, a field of blood and confusion? In short, is a great and renowned city burnt to ashes, and all its stately fabricks laid even with the ground, out of which they were at first taken? Are innumerable heaps of goods and commodities, fetch'd with great care and hazard of mens lives from the remotest parts of the world by long and tedious voyages, all consumed in a moment, and turned into heaps of rubbish? Did thousands of people lose in a few days all that they had been getting for many years together, so as to be reduc'd to extreme poverty and want? Were holy as well as prophane places demolished, so that people had not where to perform their publick devotions, and to humble themselves before that God whom they had offended? All this, and whatsoever else ever did or shall happen to mankind, to their grief and shame, must be ultimately resolved into those sins which they, ungrateful creatures, have committed against the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world. For as there is none but he can lay such punishments upon us, so it is only sin for which he doth it.

HENCE therefore, whatsoever trouble or calamity befalls us, instead of repining at it, or revenging our selves upon the instruments of it, we should search or try our ways, and consider where we have offended God, and so brought this evil upon our selves. And tho we cannot always find out the particular sin for which the punishment is inflicted, yet we may be confident it is for our sins in general. And there are many punishments that have the very character of the sin for which they are sent, engraven upon them so clearly, that he that runs may read it; and others vested with such circumstances, from whence it may be easily deduced.

As for example: There were many sins, it is true, which the inhabitants of this city were guilty of, whereby they deserved to have their habitations destroyed; as pride, malice, intemperance, uncleanness and covetousness, deceit, swearing, perjury, oppression, extortion, and the like. But these were the sins only of some particular persons, and common to them with the rest of mankind. The Inhabitants

of all other cities, as well as this, being guilty of such vices as these. Although it cannot be denied, but that God might justly be displeased with the citizens of *London* more than with others, even for these sins, by reason that they were committed against greater light and knowledge than others were, whereby greater punishments were justly due to them; there being certainly no city in the world, that ever enjoyed the gospel and means of grace more fully and constantly, than this city hath done ever since the reformation.

BUT if we enquire into those particular sins, which may seem in a more especial manner to have brought this judgment upon the city, there are two things in the fire itself that seem to give great light unto them: *First*, That it was not a judgment only upon some private citizens, but also upon the city itself, the far greatest part of it being destroyed; from whence it is easy to infer, that whatsoever hand the sins of particular persons might have in it, the sins of the city in general, or the major part of it, were the chief occasion of this so general a conflagration. And then, *Secondly*, it was no ordinary judgment, but so great, so wonderful and extraordinary, that the like was scarce ever heard of in the world before; and therefore it cannot so well be ascribed to the ordinary sins that mankind is usually guilty of, but to some such extraordinary wickedness, as was never, or very rarely committed before.

NOW these things being duly considered, it is easy to find out the *Achan* that troubled this city, the sin or sins that brought so heavy a judgment upon it. For they that lived in those days, as many here present did, or that read the history of the late rebellion, cannot but know that this city was the great promoter and abettor of it. The whole city, or at least the greatest part of it, in those days, being poisoned with such schismatical and rebellious principles, that nothing would serve their turns, but the total extirpation both of the ecclesiastical and civil government of the nation. Hence it was that those riots and tumults were here raised, which forced his Majesty to withdraw, and set up his standard in his own defence: So that the war was plainly begun here; and so it was carried on too by a constant supply of men, arms, and money, not only from citizens, but from the city itself, or the major part of them: As is plain from the several acts of common-council which were then made in those days, more like the acts of the council of war than those of a civil government.

A COUNCIL of war in actual rebellion against their King: For so the city was for many years together, plundering, sequestering, imprisoning, decimating, murdering, all they could get into their clutches that adhered to him; until at length they brought one of the most pious and excellent Princes that ever lived, to the block, and in the face of the sun murdered him before his own gate.

NOW this horrid fact, to which so many sins of the deepest dye concurred, so far as particular persons were any way guilty of it, however they escape in this world without sincere repentance, they either are or will be punished for it in the next. But the city itself, as a body politick, is not capable of rewards or punishments in the other world: And therefore almighty God, to manifest his just displeasure and indignation against it, for those atrocious crimes which he had observed in it, was pleased to punish it in this world. And seeing such extraordinary sins deserved suitable or extraordinary punishments, he in an extraordinary manner caused the greatest part of it to be burnt down to the ground; that as the greatest part of it was concerned in the sin, so the greatest part of it might undergo the punishment which was due to it: That so all the world might acknowledge the infinite wisdom and justice of God, in proportioning the punishment to the sin: And that this, and all other cities, might take warning from hence, not to raise such a flame and combustion in the kingdom, as this did then, lest at long-run it come home unto themselves, as this plainly did.

II. THESE words imply, That notwithstanding that the man was now whole, yet, if he continued in his sins, something worse would befall him. It is true, he had been very sorely afflicted before for many years, not being able to help himself, as is plain from *ver. 7*. But however our Lord here gives him to understand, that how bad soever it had been with him before, it would be worse hereafter, unless he left off his sins.

AND tho these words were spoken only to that one man, they are recorded on purpose that all might take notice of it, and not think that when God had removed

ved any judgment from them, he will punish them no more for their sins, although they continue in them; but expect something worse to come unto them, than they ever yet met withal. And indeed, both reason and justice require it should be so: For when God in great mercy hath eased men from those pressures which he laid upon them for their sins; the sins which they afterwards commit, are an abuse of his mercy, as well as a breach of his law; and therefore being greater sins, they justly deserve greater punishments at his hands. And it is but reason that they should have judgment without mercy, who have abused that very mercy which was shewed them in the midst of judgment. And this is our very case at this time. As God in great justice was pleased to destroy this city, so in great mercy he hath raised it up again; insomuch, that now the fire is almost quite forgotten; at least, there are scarce any footsteps of it to be seen. The city is whole again, as being not only wholly re-built, but inhabited too, as it was before. And now, if it be not your own faults, you may live safe and secure under God's protection: But know this, that if you return to your former sins and extravagances, for which the city was before destroyed, God hath more and greater judgments in store for you than that was, which he will most certainly inflict upon you, except you repent and turn to him with all your hearts. Hear what he himself saith, *Lev. xxvi. 14, 21, 24, 28.* Wherefore you may assure yourselves, that how much soever you have suffered already, if you still continue in your rebellion against him, God hath greater judgments behind for you than ye ever yet felt. It is true this was a sad and dreadful fire, but it was not like that of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, *Gen. xix. 24.* which in a short time destroyed not only the houses, but all the inhabitants too, except one family. And if you provoke him to it, he can send the like upon you whensoever he pleases. And what if the fire was ushered in by the plague, and accompanied with a war? He hath a worse plague, and a worse war, at hand for you, whensoever he sees good to send it: A plague like that in the rebellion of *Korah*, that in a few hours destroyed near 15000 people, *Numb. xvi. 49.* Or like that in the time of *David*, that in less than a day devoured 70000, *2 Sam. xxiv. 15.* And a war, like that at the siege of *Jerusalem*, foreign and intestine at the same time: so that you shall not only be invaded by a foreign enemy, but sheath your swords in one another's bowels.

AND as those judgments, tho they be of the same kind, yet are much worse than those which you have already felt; so he hath as bad or worse than those, of another nature for you. For he can destroy you with famine, as he did *Samaria*, *2 King. vi. 25.* or with an overflowing deluge, as he did the old world, *Gen. vii. 17, 18.* Or he can command the earth to open her mouth, and swallow you up alive, as it did *Korah*, and his accomplices in schism and sedition, *Numb. xvi.* Or if he still continue you upon earth, and your earthly blessings to you, yet he can curse both you and them, so that you shall receive no benefit or comfort from them, *Mai. ii. 2.*

THESE are sad judgments you'll say; and yet God hath far worse than those in store for you, if ye will not learn obedience by what he hath already laid upon you. For these are only temporal, whereas he hath spiritual judgments also to inflict upon you. For if ye should continue to turn faith into faction, and religion into rebellion, he can deprive you of the means of grace which you so neglect, yea and of the gospel itself, and send it to another people that will improve it better, *Rev. ii. 5.* A sad instance we have of this in *Africa* where the gospel was once so preached, that the *African* was certainly one of the most famous churches in the world, most eminent for learning and piety; and so it continued for many years, until at length the sect of the *Donatists*, much like to our *presbyterians* and *independents*, under the specious, but hypocritical pretence of purity in worship, growing numerous, the whole church was overspread with schism and faction; which prevailed so far, that all their religion was turned into disputes and controversies about it: And then God was pleased to take his gospel from them, not leaving so much as the face of a church among them; insomuch, that for many ages last past, and to this day, the whole country is become mahometan and heathenish, and no christian is suffered to live among them, except in *Tangier*, and some few places belonging to the *Spaniards* and *Portuguese*. God grant that the schisms, which have reigned so long among us, may not have the same dismal effects upon this nation,

AND what if God should, as I hope he will, continue his gospel, and the means of grace, to so ungrateful a people; yet he can withdraw his blessing from them,

or

or blind your eyes, that ye shall not see the things that belong to your peace, or suffer you to be seduced into error, heresy, schism, blasphemy, *sending you strong delusions, that ye should believe a lye*, 2 Thess. ii. 11. A judgment which a great part of this city hath lain under for many years together. And after all that is come upon you, he can harden your hearts as he did *Pharaoh's*, and make you stupid and senseless of your sad condition. And worse than all this still, he can let you alone in your sins without controul, never punish you at all, nor correct you for them in this life, but still suffer you to go on, heaping up wrath against the day of wrath upon your own heads, without ever minding you of the sad consequents of it. *Hof. iv. 17. Isaiah i. 5.*

AND when he hath laid all those, both temporal and spiritual, punishments upon you, he hath not yet done with you. No, the worst of all is still behind, and that is eternal ruin and destruction in hell-fire, *Matth. xxv. 41.*

Consider these things, and then tell me, Whether if you continue in your sins, worse things may not come unto you than ye have yet felt.

3. This saying of our Lord implies, that the best and only way to prevent and secure ourselves from future judgment, is to forsake those sins for which we have formerly suffered. For this is the means that our Lord himself here prescribes for it, saying, *sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

AND this certainly holds good in all cases; so that whatsoever sins any man hath formerly committed, if he heartily repent of them, and forsake them, so as never more to return to them, he may be confident that, in and through the merits of Christ's death and passion, he shall never be punished any more for them. For thus saith the Lord, *If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned to him*, Ezek. xviii. 21, 22. And again, *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so Iniquity shall not be your ruin*, ver. 30. And so frequently elsewhere. This being indeed the great blessing that is purchased for us, and promised to us in the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins; whereby we are absolved and discharged from those obligations which lay upon us, to undergo the punishments which God hath threatened against them: For if our obligation to punishment be taken off, before the punishment itself will never be inflicted upon us. And therefore, whosoever desires to be freed from those punishments, which he either feels or fears by reason of his former sins; let him but now forsake them, and turn to the Lord with all his heart, and he hath the word of God himself for it, that his sins shall be all pardoned, and he shall never be punished any more for them.

AND so it is in our present case: This city justly provoked God to lay this heavy judgment upon it: And if ye continue in the same sins, ye must expect that something worse will come unto you: Whereas if ye sincerely repent of your former sins, and serve God for the future with a perfect heart and a willing mind, ye will thereby secure both yourselves and city from future judgments, and live continually under the favour and protection of almighty God.

Now, having thus briefly both explained these words, and applied them to the sad occasion of our present meeting, I hope I need say no more, but only desire you to keep this divine saying of our Saviour always in our minds and memories, whenever any judgment is laid upon you, and particularly when you commemorate the fire of *London*, as we do this day; and still apprehend our Saviour saying to you, *sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.*

YOU cannot but be all sensible what a great confusion this city was once in upon this day, when the wrath of God burnt so furiously against it, that the greatest part of it was laid waste and desolate. But, blessed be God for it, it is now rebuilt and so made whole again. And as our Saviour meeting the poor man, whom he had cured of a long distemper, in the temple, first uttered these words to him; so now finding you at this time here, he repeats the same to you, and to the whole city, *Behold thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.* Do not think, that God hath spent all his arrows upon you, or that he cannot or will not punish you any more for your sins, altho you continue in them. No, mistake not yourselves, he hath still more and greater punishments ready at hand, which he will most certainly inflict upon you, unless you leave off those sins whereby ye have deserved them.

WHEREFORE be advised before it be too late. You saw upon this day, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God! Have a care that you do not so again; for if you do, ye may be confident, that he will punish you yet seven times more for your sins. And therefore as ever ye desire not to feel greater judgments than ever ye yet felt, break off your sins by repentance, and your iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor. Avoid for the future whatsoever ye know to be offensive to God, and dishonourable to his great name, and to that holy religion that he hath established among you: Especially take heed that you fall not again into those horrid vices for which you have smarted so much already. Suffer not the devil nor his agents to seduce you any more into schism and faction, into riots and sedition, into treasons and rebellions against your prince, and such-like sins as are destructive of government, and therefore will be severely punished, as ye have found by woful experience, by the universal Governor of the world. It is not long, ye know, since a great part of the city were running into these extravagancies again; which, if they had taken effect, would have brought not only the whole city, but kingdom also, to utter ruin and destruction. But he that stilleth the raging of the sea, was pleased likewise to restrain the madness of the people, and so put a stop to those judgments which were ready to fall upon the city. So that ye have time now to consider and bethink yourselves what to do, that ye may prevent them for the future. And when ye have considered all ye can, you'll find no other way possible to do it, but by following your Saviour's counsel and command, *Sin no more.*

MAKE no more schisms or divisions in the church, nor riots and tumults against the state. Despise dominions no more, nor speak evil of dignities. Practise no more treason or rebellion against the king, nor oppose those who are commissioned by him. Run no more into corners, nor neglect the publick worship of the most high God. Profane his sacred name no more, nor abuse it, to palliate any wicked project and device. Mock God no more, nor play the hypocrite with him that is the searcher of hearts. Separate yourselves no more from our church, nor refuse the means of grace and salvation, which are there administered unto you. Carry yourselves no more so irreverently in God's presence, nor think much to bow down and worship him, when ye approach to his divine Majesty. Turn your backs no more on the holy sacrament, nor refuse the great mercies which are there offered to you. Turn the grace of God no more into lasciviousness, nor despise the judgments he hath laid upon you. Suffer yourselves no more to be seduced by lying spirits into error and heresy, nor tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; but keep close to the articles of our church, as grounded upon the word of God. Allow yourselves no more in any known sin, nor omit any known duty, either to God or man. In short, *Fear God, and honour the king, and meddle no more with them which are given to change.* But take warning from what ye have already felt, and remember our Saviour's words; *Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*



SERMON LXXXVII.

Repentance the only Method of escaping eternal Judgments.

LUKE xiii. 3.

I tell you, nay ; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

WHOSOEVER converseth with the writings and histories of the first ages of our church, cannot but acknowledge, that they exceeded ours in the real practice of the christian religion, as much as ours exceed them in the more outward and hypocritical profession of it. In those days, we might read the gospel of Christ in the lives of Christians; and know what their Master taught, by seeing what his disciples did. How devout, how solemn, how magnificent were they in their publick service and worship of Almighty God? How zealous for the faith of Christ? How stedfast in the defence of it: ready every moment, yea ambitious to seal it with their own blood? How humble and lowly were they in their own eyes? How sober and modest in their carriage towards others? How just and righteous in all their dealings? The vices that are so common among christian professors now, were scarce ever heard of amongst Christians in those golden ages. Where do you read of their pride and self-conceitedness, their luxury and covetousness, their censuring or back-biting one another? These are properly the reigning sins of our times, which the primitive Christians were so averse from, that malice itself could scarce ever fasten any such thing upon them. And as for sedition and rebellion against their lawful magistrates, it was not so much as named amongst them, as became Christians. Insomuch, that altho for several ages together the magistrates were all pagans, and were often persecuting of them even unto death; yet all the while, there is not the least footstep to be found of any rebellion, so much as designed by any one Christian in the world. So strictly did the Christians in those times keep to the rules of Christ and his apostles, making it their business to walk in all the commandments of God blameless.

AND if we should enquire into the reasons, why all true christian grace and virtue doth not flourish now, as much as then, I cannot but attribute it very much to this; That the great and necessary duty of fasting is so generally neglected in our days, which antiently was the constant exercise of all Christians, especially at this time of the year: It being the general custom of the church in those days, to devote the whole time of *Lent* to fasting and prayer, to the exercise of repentance and mortification, to the examining their hearts, and humbling themselves before Almighty God, imploring his aid and assistance of them in the performance of what he required from them. By which means, their hearts were brought into so holy a frame and disposition, and they were furnished with so much grace and power from above, as enabled them to walk as became truly penitent and believing Christians all the year after.

AND for the better attaining these great and glorious ends in the observation of this fast, it was the usual custom of the bishops and pastors of the several churches in

in those days, to preach frequently to the people, to excite them to a strict observance of this fast, and to instruct them how to observe it, so as that they might receive real benefit and advantage by it, in order to their present service, and future enjoyment of the chiefest good. Hence we have extant at this day many excellent and divine sermons, preach'd by the great lights of the primitive church upon this occasion; some immediately before it, and in order to it; others during the time of *Lent*. Such are several of the sermons or homilies of St. *Basil*, St. *Ambrose*, St. *Chrysostom*, and St. *Augustine*: *Maximus Taurinensis* also, *Leo* the great, *Chrysologus*, *Cæsarius* bishop of *Arles*, and many others of the same ages, have at this day sermons extant upon this occasion. Indeed, this was the principal time of the year for preaching; and such churches as had little or no preaching all the year besides, were sure to have it in *Lent*.

AND that the people were as diligent in hearing, as the bishops were in preaching at this time, is plain from a remarkable passage in *Athanasius's* apology to *Constantius* the emperor; where that great champion of the christian faith tells the emperor, that ἐν ταῖς συνάξεσι τῆς τεσσαρεσθουσῆς, at their assemblies or congregations in *Lent*, there was such a throng and crowd of people in the churches of *Alexandria*, that many of both sexes, and of all ages, both old and young, were even stifled in the press, and carried home for dead. But as the father adds, τῷ Θεῷ παρέχοντι τέθυκε μὲν ἑδούς; by the blessing of God, none dy'd. Which one instance is enough to shew how religiously this fast was observed at that time: And it is no wonder, that they who are thus given up to fasting and prayer, were eminent for all true religion and virtue.

NOW it having pleased the most high God, to put it into the heart of our pious and learned bishop, to use all means possible to reduce our church to its first constitution, even to an exact conformity with the primitive, as it was designed at the reformation; for that end, amongst other things, he hath been pleased to revive this antient custom of preaching at this time, hoping thereby, that many may, by the blessing of God, be prevailed upon to live up to the rules and orders of our church; and by consequence as the primitive Christians did, and all true Christians ought to live. Hence therefore, that so good a design may have its desired effect at least upon you, who go so far in this good old way, as to be present upon this solemn occasion, I thought good to pitch upon the words which I have now read, for the subject of my present discourse, as containing the necessity of repentance, the great work of this time, for which we fast and pray, and without which neither fasting nor praying will avail us any thing; our blessed Saviour himself having told you with his own mouth, that *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*.

THE occasion of which words, in brief was this: Whilst *Pontius Pilate* was governor of *Judea*, several *Galileans*, supposed by some to be the *Samaritans* spoken of by *Josephus*, made an insurrection there; for which, *Pilate* not only slew them, but mingled their blood with the sacrifices which they had offered. Upon this, the censorious *Pharisees*, or some such kind of injudicious and uncharitable people, presently began to censure and condemn them for very wicked and ungodly men, only because God was pleased to lay such an extraordinary punishment upon them. But when our Saviour had heard this sad story, and the people's censure upon it, he presently teacheth them another lesson; Suppose ye, said he, that these *Galileans* were sinners above all other *Galileans*, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay: But except, &c. And to bring it home to the *Jews*, he instanceth in another sad disaster that befel eighteen persons in *Jerusalem* itself, verse 4. and then repeats the same words again, I tell you, nay: But except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

As if he should have said, For all that you have heard of these great judgments that have happened unto others, do not you therefore judge them worse than yourselves; for whatsoever thoughts you may have of your selves, I tell you, I assure you, that *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*. Where the words, ὁμοίως and ὡσαύτως, both which we translate *likewise*, are not so to be understood, as if they signified, that all should *perish* in the like or same manner as the others did, but that they should *perish* in general, or to all eternity: For our Lord here takes occasion from their speaking of others temporal, to mind them of their own eternal destruction, and to acquaint them with the only way whereby to avoid it, even by *repenting*. But I say unto you, &c. Which words are the more to be observ'd

by us, both because they were spoken by our Saviour himself, and because he expresseth them with so great an asseveration. *I tell you: I, the Son of God, and the only Saviour of mankind: I, that am come on purpose to save you from perishing: I tell you; that, Except ye repent, &c.*

Now that you may fully understand your Saviour's mind and intent in these words; we shall consider,

I. WHAT he means by repenting.

II. WHAT by perishing.

III. WHAT necessity there is for our repenting, in order for our being preserved from perishing; and so what reason we have to believe this proposition, That, *Except ye repent ye shall all perish.*

FIRST therefore: What are we here to understand by repentance? A question, which none of you can think either needless, or impertinent. For as you all desire not to perish, you cannot but be equally concern'd to understand what it is to repent, without which, you cannot but perish. And, besides that, how many have thought they have repented, when indeed they have not? And that, meerly too upon this account, because they have not clearly understood the true nature and notion of it. The papists ordinarily make repentance to consist in nothing else but in a little contrition for their sins, confession of them to the priest, and then doing penance for them; that is, inflicting some pecuniary or corporal punishment upon themselves, either of their own accord, or else by order of their priest: And then they do not only think that they have repented sufficiently; but also, that they have made abundant recompence and satisfaction to God for all their sins against him. But if hell-torments can never satisfy God's justice for our sins; (for if they ever could, they would not be eternal) How much less can a few inconsiderable chastisements of our bodies do it?

AND among ourselves, how many are there that cheat and delude themselves into a vain and groundless conceit that they have repented, meerly because they have had some transient passions of grief and sorrow for their sins; or because they have left off some of the more gross and scandalous crimes which they were wont to be addicted to. But if this was all the repenting that is required of us, it would be easy enough to do it. But mistake not yourselves, repentance contains a great deal more in it than all this amounts to; yea, so much, that when you understand it fully you'll conclude it to be a very hard and difficult work to flesh and blood: yet it is that which you must all do, or else be undone for ever. And therefore, I shall faithfully acquaint you with whatsoever is required to the due performance of it.

FOR which end we must first know, that repentance, properly so called, doth not consist in any outward act whatsoever; but although it manifesteth and expresseth itself in all the actions of a man's life; yet it is seated only in the mind, and is properly nothing else but the recovery or restitution of the mind from its former folly and distraction, into a right frame and constitution. And so much is implied in the very word here used, *Ἐὰν μὴ μετανόητε*, *Except you change your minds*; for so the word properly signifies, both according to the notation, and also according to the ancient usage of it, as might easily be shewn. And thus our Saviour himself describes the repenting prodigal, by his coming to himself, and so being of another, a more sound and sober mind than he was before, *Luke xv. 17*. And so when any one truly repents, his mind is quite altered from what it was before; its bent and inclinations being taken off from sin, and turned unto God: Hence, in the language our Saviour spake, the ordinary word for repentance is **μετανοια** *conversion*. And therefore it is more than probable, that our Saviour expresseth himself when he spake these words according to the *Syriack* translation, which we now have of them: Which is, **ܐܕܘܠܝܢ** *Except ye return, or be converted*. And indeed, nothing can be more plain, both from the old and new testament, than that repentance and conversion are one and the same thing: So that none can be said properly to repent, but he that turns from sin and evil, to God and goodness; the several passions or affections of his mind being averse from the evil which before they were inclined to, and inclined to the good, which before they were averse from. Which, that we may the better understand, we shall briefly

briefly consider how, in true repentance, the mind first turns from sin, and then how it turns to God.

FIRST therefore, the mind turns from sin, not only by taking off its concupiscible affections, as love, joy, and the like, from it; but likewise, by placing its contrary passions upon it, especially these four, fear, grief, hatred, and detestation; for in true repentance, fear commonly leads the van. When a man considers with himself, how great those sins are which he hath committed against God; how great a God he is, against whom he hath committed them; and, by consequence, how great those torments are which he hath deserved by them: When he considers these things, I say, he cannot but fear and tremble at the remembrance of his sins, and at the thoughts of that evil, which is ready to fall upon him for them. Which fear of future evil makes him heartily sorry for his former sins, whereby he hath made himself obnoxious to it. The remembrance whereof is so grievous to him, the burden so intolerable, that he is scarce able to endure himself, his heart being every moment ready to sink within him at each consideration of his folly and madness, in offending so great and gracious a God as he hath done. And verily, this sense and sorrow for our sins, is so great a part of true repentance that it is often put for the whole. But where it is sincere, it stays not there: But this remorse and grief for sin, is always accompanied with, or rather it is followed by, an hating and loathing of it, as of that which is not only offensive unto God, contrary to his laws, and destructive to our own souls; but unbefitting our very nature, and contrary to that excellent frame and temper wherein we were at first created: And therefore cannot but be the proper object of our hatred and abhorrence. And when this hatred against sin is once enkindled in our souls, it soon breaks forth into a detestation of it, resolutions against it, and constant, sincere endeavours to fly from it. Which *fuga* or flight from sin is that passion of the mind which is opposed to desire. Thus, in true repentance, the mind is changed; its concupiscible affections being wholly taken off from sin, and its contrary passions placed upon it.

BUT this is not all yet. For repentance doth not only put a man upon refusing the evil which he before chose; but likewise upon choosing that good he before refused. And so it doth not turn his affections from one sin to another; but from all sin to God. Neither indeed is it possible to turn from all sin, without turning unto God: It self being a sin, and a great one too, not to turn to God. And therefore when there is a real change wrought in the mind, such a one as may justly be termed repentance; the will is not only taken off from sin and vanity, but it is wholly bent and inclined to God and goodness, so as to be steadfastly resolved for the future to live in newness of life. Which choice, and resolution of the will, carries all the affections along with it: So that now, the true penitent begins to prize and love God above all things else, and to take pleasure in pleasing and obeying of him, and to desire his love and favour more than all things in the world besides.

AND thus a man's mind is quite altered from what it was. His affections all shifting hands, as it were, and changing objects with one another. For what he before loved, he now hates; and what before he hated, he now loves. He is now troubled for those sins he used to take pleasure in, and takes pleasure in those duties he used to be troubled at. He was wont to follow after evil, and fly from good; but now on the contrary, he follows what is good, and flies from evil: And so is quite another thing than what he was, as to every passion of his mind, and motion of his soul.

AND then, Lastly, a man's mind being thus changed, and all his affections reduced into a due order, his life and conversation cannot but be so too: For it is the heart that influenceth all our actions. If that be good, our actions cannot but be so too. Hence it is, that good works do necessarily, yea naturally, flow from true repentance, and can never be separated from it. And therefore they are called, *works meet for repentance*, Matth. iii. 8. So that it is in vain to pretend to repentance, without amendment of life. For trees do not more naturally bear their proper fruits, than true repentance brings forth good works. Good works, I say, in general. For it is not any particular act or acts that can manifest our repentance, but an universal obedience unto all the laws of God, to the utmost of our power and skill, and a sincere performance of all such works as we know or believe to be truly good, whether they have respect to God or man.

WHEN such a change therefore, as I have now described, is wrought in your hearts, and from thence diffused into all your actions; then and not till then, you may properly be said to have repented; and done that, without which, Christ himself here tells you, *Ye must all perish*. And so I come to the next thing which I promised to shew; even what we are here to understand by perishing.

THE words here used are, πάντες ὁμοίως ἀπολείσθαι: *Ye shall all likewise perish; or be destroyed*, as the word properly signifies, and is commonly translated: Neither is there any kind of destruction, but what is imported by it. But here it certainly denotes that destruction under which all other is comprised; that which our sins deserve, and, except we repent of them, will bring upon us, even hell-fire; which is ordinarily in scripture expressed by *destruction*, 2 *Theff.* i. 9. Hence Judas is called, *the son of perdition*; or destruction, *John* xvii. 12. because he went to his own place, *Acts* i. 25. that is, in plain *english*, to hell: Which is therefore called *his own place*, because it was due unto him, and appointed for him; as it is indeed for all impenitent sinners whatsoever; they have nothing which they can so properly call their own, as hell. This they have abundantly deserved, and so have an absolute right and title to it. And they need not fear being kept out, when they go into the other world to take possession of it: For Christ himself assures them, they shall all go thither, in that he saith, *They shall all perish*.

BUT here, perhaps, you may expect, that I should give you a description of this place which so properly belongs to you, if you continue in your sins without repenting of them. But you must excuse me; for I am as unable to describe it, as I am unwilling ever to see or feel it. Alas! I cannot think of it without fear and trembling, nor speak of it without horror and amazement, as knowing that both myself, and every soul here present, hath deserved to be there before now; and to experience that, which no tongue is able to express! Howsoever, that you may not be altogether ignorant of the place you must all go to ere long, except you repent; I shall mind you in general of two things much to be observed in it: And they are such, as that the serious consideration of them cannot surely but prevail upon you to repent, without any more ado.

FIRST, therefore; you must know this is a place where there is no such thing as pleasure and comfort, either real or imaginary, to be found. It is true there is nothing upon earth which ye can take any real delight in; yet, howsoever, you can make a shift to fancy to yourselves a great deal of pleasure in something or other which you meet with here below. But when you once come thither; as there is nothing that will be really good for you, so neither will you find any thing that you can so much fancy or imagine to be so. Yet you will not only be stript of all true comfort, but of all expectation of it too. Could you have any ground to hope, that tho you have no comfort for a while, yet the time will come when you shall; the very thoughts and expectations of it would be a comfort to you. But you will be so far from hoping for it, that you will be certainly assured, that you shall never have it; but that as you are at first, so you shall always be, deprived of whatsoever is or can be a comfort to you.

AND therefore, if you be still resolved upon it, to retain your sins, and so bid defiance both to heaven and hell too: Be it known unto you, the time is coming, when you must bid adieu, farewell, to all, both real and seeming comfort, so as never to know what it means more. For as you can carry none along with you, be sure you will find none there, were all impenitent sinners must live for ever.

AND yet this is not all neither. But, in the second place, as you will be there deprived of whatsoever is or can be good and convenient for you; so you will be tormented too, with whatsoever is or can be evil, painful, or destructive to you. For your Saviour himself hath told you before-hand, what he will one day say unto you; even, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, *Matth.* xxv. 41. *Depart from me*: By that, you will be deprived of all good. *Into everlasting fire*: There you will find whatsoever is evil, or grievous, either to your souls or bodies, and that for evermore.

BUT I shall insist no longer upon this ungrateful subject. Neither should I have insisted at all upon it, but that it is necessary for you to be sometimes minded of your latter end, and of the sad and dismal consequences of your sins, except you repent, and turn sincerely from them; your Saviour himself having told you, that *Except you repent, you must all perish*. Under which one word, is comprehended, all that

that misery and torment which I before spake of, and infinitely more than I am able to express, or conceive. All which will most certainly fall upon every soul here present, that doth not repent and turn to God.

BUT this, I know, many are very loth to believe, because they would not have it to be so. And did you verily believe it, I am almost confident you would not dare to live in any known sin whatsoever; nor put off your repentance, as heretofore, from day to day. Wherefore, that I may convince you of it; having shewn you what it is to repent, and what it is to perish; I shall now, in the last place, shew the necessary connexion between these two; not repenting and perishing: And so, that unless a man do repent, there is no help for it; he must of necessity perish. Now, to explain this, we must know, there is atwo-fold necessity of repentance under the gospel itself: *Necessitas præcepti & medii.*

FIRST, Repentance is still necessary, because commanded. For Christ hath not taken off any of our obligations to repentance, but rather hath made them stronger. For now that Christ is come into the world, God doth in a peculiar manner, *command all men every where to repent*, Acts xvii. 30. Which command was first proclaimed by our Saviour's own mouth: Yea, the first command that he ever laid upon mankind, after he made himself known unto them, was, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Matt. iv. 17. And therefore it is a groundless and absurd, as well as dangerous and damnable opinion, to assert, That now that Christ hath suffered, and made satisfaction for our sins, we are obliged only in gratitude and ingenuity to repent of them. For we are as much bound in conscience to repent of our sins now, as if Christ had never died for them. Yea, if possible, and more too; because the command is not only the same, but it is now enforced with greater obligations, and stronger inducements to obedience, than ever it was before: Nay, and more than that too; for all that Christ hath done and suffered for our sins, yet repentance is as necessary, as if it was the only means still whereby to expiate our sins, and to regain the love and favour of Almighty God towards us.

AND that is the second kind of necessity there still is of repentance; it being the only means whereby it is possible for us to obtain remission of our sins: Not that repentance is any cause of pardon, or any means whereby to satisfy God's justice for our sins: For this, Christ hath done already for us, being made a propitiation for our sins, or a propitiatory sacrifice: Such as God required in order to their expiation. And we must not think that he now requires repentance of us, to make up any flaw, defect, or insufficiency in the death of Christ: For if his blood could not expiate our sins, how much less can our tears do it? But howsoever, altho our repentance contributes nothing at all towards the meriting pardon and forgiveness at the hands of God; yet it is that, without which the pardon and forgiveness which Christ hath merited for us, shall never be applied to us. Christ, by his death, hath made our sins all pardonable; yet so, as that they are never actually pardoned to any one that does not truly repent: As is plain from the many places of scripture, where repentance is still put before, and necessarily requir'd in order to remission.

INDEED, nothing can be more plain and manifest from the whole tenour both of the old and new testament, than that repentance always was, and always will be indispensably required of mankind; tho not as a cause, yet as a necessary qualification, in order unto pardon. Tho there be nothing of causality, nothing of condignity, nothing of merit in it; yet there is such a congruity and fitness in it, to qualify a man for pardon, that God hath appointed it as the only means whereby to obtain it. Even as it is amongst men: nature, reason, and custom, jointly teach, that if a man hath committed a trespass or injury against his neighbour, he should be sorry for it, ask forgiveness, and faithfully promise to do so no more, before it be pardoned. And it is upon this easy condition, that Christ commands us to forgive each other; saying, *If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him*, Luke xvii. 3, 4. And as he would have us to forgive each other, so himself promiseth to forgive us, if we do repent; not else.

AND if your sins can never be pardoned without repentance; it follows in course, that *except ye repent, ye shall all perish*. For the sins you are guilty of, have obliged you to undergo all the penalty, which by the law of God is due unto them: Which is nothing less than eternal ruin and destruction. And unless this your guilt and obligation to punishment be taken off, by having your sins pardoned, you are every moment

moment liable and obnoxious to it. But except you repent, your sins will never be pardon'd; and, by consequence, you must perish for ever.

BUT I need not have gone so far to have proved this. For, I suppose, you all believe what our Saviour said to be true; and therefore to be believed, because he said it. But amongst the many divine sayings which proceeded from him, while he was upon earth, this you see was one thing which he expressly affirmed saying, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*. So that was there never another text in all the scriptures, from whence to infer this truth, this one of itself is sufficient to make it certain and unquestionable to all that profess the christian faith: Especially considering, that he who spake it, was not only infallible, but one that came into the world on purpose to save mankind from perishing. And therefore, it cannot be imagined that he should ever tell them, that *except they repent, they must all perish*; if it was possible to be kept from perishing, without repentance.

FROM hence therefore we may infallibly conclude for a most certain and undeniable truth, That every soul here present, that doth not repent of his sins, and turn to God, shall inevitably perish, and be condemned to everlasting darkness, horror and desolation. I speak not this to affright you out of your wits; but rather, if possible, to bring you into them. I know you all desire not to go to hell, and perish for ever: But, I am sure, it is impossible for you to avoid it without repentance; seeing Christ himself, by whom alone it is possible for any man to escape eternal damnation, hath told you in as plain terms as he could possibly speak; that, *Except ye repent, ye must all likewise perish*.

BUT if so; what do ye mean, my brethren, to spend your time, and throw away your short-lived days, upon the impertinencies of this transient world; and, in the mean while neglect that great, that necessary, that indispensable work, which lies upon you all to do, or else to perish, and be undone for ever; even to repent, and turn to God? What, do you think it possible to have your sins pardoned, or your souls saved, without it? Do you think it possible to escape hell, and eternal damnation, without it? Hath not your Saviour himself told you, that *except ye repent, ye must all perish*? And do you think he spake these words in jest, and meant not what he said when he spake them? How then can you expect to escape destruction, without repentance, when Christ himself hath told you, you shall not? No: Deceive not yourselves. Never an idle or impertinent, much less any false or unfaithful word, ever proceeded out of his sacred and divine mouth: and therefore, you may be confident, that you'll all find that he meant as he spake, when he utter'd these words; and, by consequence, that it is impossible for any of you to be preserved from utter ruin and destruction, except you repent sincerely of all your sins, and devote yourselves for the future wholly to the service of Almighty God.

AND think not to say within yourselves, that God's mercies are infinite, and Christ's merits are all-sufficient; for tho they be so, as really they are, you'll be never the better for it, except you repent. For God will be infinitely merciful, and Christ's merits are all-sufficient to all that do repent, and to none but those that do: And therefore, do not delude yourselves with vain hopes of pardon and salvation, without repentance. For Christ certainly knew better than we can, upon what terms he will preserve any man from perishing: And yet you see, he did not only assert it when he was upon earth, but hath left it upon record for all mankind to read and know, that except they repent he will never save them, but they must inevitably perish for evermore.

BY this time, I hope, you are all convinc'd of the necessity that lies upon you to repent; and therefore are ready to hearken to any motion that shall be made unto you, for the better performance of it. And although, I fear, there may be many here present, who when they have heard a discourse, though upon so necessary a subject, will concern themselves no more about it: Yet, I hope, there are some among you that have already resolved within themselves to hazard their salvation no longer; but to set upon the great work of repentance in good earnest, and to do every thing that may be necessary or helpful unto them in it. To such therefore I shall propound one great duty, both as necessary in itself, and as the most effectual means you can possibly use, for the accomplishment of so hard and difficult a work as repentance is; and that is, the duty of fasting. A duty, which the
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most High God hath frequently enjoined you: A duty which our blessed Saviour ranks with prayer, and alms, directing us how to give our alms, how to pray, and how to fast, at the same time, *Mat. vi.* which certainly he would never have done, had not he reckoned fasting as necessary a duty as any of the other. And therefore, as it is a sin never to pray, and a sin never to give alms, so it is a sin likewise never to fast; for it is the continual neglect of a known duty: Which, as I have shewn, is inconsistent with true repentance: To which therefore, fasting is in itself so necessary, that, to deal plainly with you, if there be any persons here present, as I fear there are too many, who never yet gave themselves to fasting as well as prayer; I dare assure them, in the name and presence of Almighty God, that they have not yet repented: and therefore had need to look to themselves, for their condition is very desperate.

ESPECIALLY, considering that fasting is necessary, not only as it is a duty, but likewise as it is the means whereby to work repentance in us. For, in order to repentance, it is necessary that we cast out and avoid all sin, to the utmost of our power. But many sins, you know, especially those that do so easily beset you, are so stubborn and headstrong, that they are like the devils our Saviour speaks of, that cannot be cast out but by prayer and fasting. And I verily believe, that one great reason why many strive against their sins, and cannot conquer them, is, because they do not take this course, even by abstinence and fasting, to subdue the flesh to the spirit. For if that was once done, no sin will be able to stand before you; at least, not so as to domineer and prevail over you. Do but make tryal of it, and you will soon find it to be true; and think not your selves to be above it, or to stand in no need of it; as many in our days do. For I suppose you'll all grant me, that *St. Paul* was as strong in the faith, as eminent a christian, as any here present at this time; yet he was forced to keep his body under, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when he had preached unto others, he himself should become a cast away, *1 Cor. ix. 27.* By this means it was, that *St. Paul* did it; and by this means it is, that we must mortify our lusts, repent, and turn from sin to God, if ever we desire to do it effectually.

AND, as in order to your thorough repentance, I would advise you to the frequent exercise of this duty; so in order to your speedy repentance, let me beseech you to do it now. Now especially, that the church requires it. For as we ought to fast in general, in obedience to God, our heavenly Father; so we ought to fast now, in obedience and conformity to his spouse, the church, which is the mother of us all. For this hath been her constant practice in all ages: insomuch, that till of late days, we never heard of any church in the whole christian world, but what fasted at this time of the year, or before *Easter*. And certainly such a custom as this could never have prevailed so, as it hath done in all places and ages since the apostles days, if there had not been at first very good authority for it; and if christians had not all along received extraordinary benefit and advantage by it. And if you would but be all persuaded to observe this fast as you ought to do, I do not question but that you also would find it, by the blessing of God, so beneficial to your souls health, that you will have cause to bless God to all eternity, that you ever lived in a church that required it of you. But for that end you must remember to keep this and so in all other fasts aright. Not as the papists, who abstaining from nothing but flesh, and using all sorts of other the most delicious food and wine, do rather feast than fast in *Lent*: But you, when you fast, use such abstinence, whereby you may attain the end of fasting, even to bring down the body into subjection to the soul, to make it tame and tractable, fit to receive, patient to endure and ready to observe the dictates and commands of reason; that the flesh being thus subdued, you may ever obey the motions of God's Holy Spirit in righteousness and true holiness: which that you may obtain, together with your fasting which fits you for it, you must earnestly pray to Almighty God, That he would be pleased to bestow that measure of his grace and spirit upon you, as may enable you sincerely to repent, and turn to him: Trusting also at the same time, and believing stedfastly on our blessed Saviour for his assistance of you in it; yea, and for his giving true repentance to you. For it is *he that is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins, Acts v. 31.*

By the faithful and constant use of these means, appointed by God for that end, there is never a soul here present, but may repent, and become a new creature, so as to have your passions allayed, your lusts subdued, your pride abated, your affections all taken off from all things here below, and fixed only upon God: and by consequence you may all become as humble, as holy, as eminent, for all true grace and virtue, as any of the primitive christians ever were, or as yourselves are required to be, in order to your preservation from ruin and destruction.

AND, oh! that this might be the happy effect of your meeting together at this time! That you would all resolve, by the blessing and assistance of the most high God, to set upon this great work of repenting in good earnest, and never leave, untill it be accomplished in you! How happy creatures would you then become! Then your former sins would be all pardoned, and your persons justified before God. Then he that made you, would have mercy upon you, and receive you into grace and favour. Then he would give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. Then whatsoever happens in the world for the punishment of others, you would be still secure under God's protection. Then God would hear the prayers, and grant the petitions you this day put up unto him in behalf of our gracious sovereign, and of his forces both by sea and land. Then God would continue to preserve his majesty's sacred person, and to bless him with victory, and all good success. Then he would bless you also with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Then all things would work together for your good; and the whole creation conspire to make you happy. And after a few days more spent in fasting and praying, and doing good upon earth, you would be installed glorified saints in the choir of heaven; where you will live with God, and with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and sing forth his praises for evermore.

WHEREAS on the other side, if you refuse and rebel; if, notwithstanding all God's threats and promises, you will still continue in your sins without repenting of them: be it known unto you, as God's word is true, you will be destroyed. For it was not I, but Christ himself, that said it with his own mouth, *that except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

YEA, by this means, ye may obtain God's favour and blessing not only for your selves, but the whole nation, in protecting and prospering our gracious sovereign in all his righteous undertakings for the defence of our church and kingdom: *Which God, &c.*



S E R M O N LXXXVIII.

Repentance and Faith, the two great Branches of
the Evangelical Covenant.

MARK i. 15.

Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.

THE serpent having no sooner deceived the woman, but it was immediately foretold, That *the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*; and so the second *Adam* was promised as soon as the first was fallen: Hence the virtue and meritoriousness of his then promised death and passions, commenced as soon as mankind had need of them: All they that lived before his actual coming into the world, being as capable to be saved by him, as we that live after it. But seeing their salvation depended upon their believing in the promise of his coming, God was therefore pleased in all ages to raise up prophets to put them in mind of it, until the thirty sixth century from the beginning of the world, when the time of his coming drew near, the prophecies all ceased, *Malachi* being acknowledged by the *Jews* themselves to have been the last of the prophets. Wherefore he being to seal up all the prophecies that had gone before concerning Christ, he doth not only assure us of the *Messiah's* coming, but that he should come into the second temple, which then was but new-erected, *Mal. iii. 1.* Where we may observe, that the *Messiah* was then suddenly to come, and a messenger was sent to prepare the way before him; with which messenger, or forerunner of the *Messiah*, the prophet concludes his own, and all other prophecies, saying, in the name of most high God, *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, Mal. iv. 5, 6.*

Now the prophecies being all ceased, and concluding with so clear and full a prediction of the coming of Christ the Son of righteousness, and the Saviour of the world: Hence the *Jews*, to whom these prophecies were particularly revealed, from that time were in a general expectation of him; till about 400 years more being expired, there appeared a certain mean and abject person among them, called *John the Baptist*, because he went about preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and baptizing all such as came unto him: And the sum and substance of what he preached to them, was, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, Mat. iii. 2.* Where, by the kingdom of heaven we are to understand, the gospel, or the œconomy of the *new testament*, which is therefore called a kingdom, because it was to be ordered after the manner of a new-erected kingdom, wherein Christ himself was to be King, all believers his subjects, to be governed with laws and prohibitions, having rewards and punishments annexed to them, suitable to the nature of this kingdom; which is called the kingdom of heaven, because it was originally established in heaven, and to be governed after an heavenly and spiritual manner. It requires heavenly duties, and promiserh heavenly rewards; and tho it be begun in this, it is perfected and consummated in the world to come, in the eternal kingdom of heaven there. This kingdom *Daniel* spake of,

of, *Dan. vii. 13, 14.* *John* saith, was now at hand, because the *Messiah*, the founder and head of it, was now very suddenly to be revealed: And therefore he calls upon all to repent; *Repent*, saith he, *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* But why did *John* make repentance the only subject of his preaching? The reason was because he was sent before to prepare the way for the Lord, according to the prophecies of *Isaiab, Chap. xl. v. 3.* and *Malachi, Chap. iii. v. 1.* and *Chap. iv. v. 6.* and the prediction of the angel, *Luke i. 16, 17.* But there was no way for him to prepare mankind for the reception of the *Messiah*, but by exhorting and calling upon them to repent, both of their former superstitions, and wicked lives; for unless they were convinced of their former errors they would never embrace the truth; and unless they were convinced of, and humbled for their sins, they would never go to Christ for pardon: And therefore he saith, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Making the approach of the *Messiah* the reason why they should repent; because by him, if they do repent, they may be pardoned; but without repentance, they could have no part or portion in his kingdom.

BUT the *Jews* being now big with the expectation of the promised *Messias*, as of one that should reign over all the world, and deliver them from the *Roman* bondage, and restore them to their former liberty; as may be gathered from heathenish, as well as christian and *Jewish* writers: Hence they hearing *John* speak so much of a kingdom being at hand, they flocked about him, and were baptized of him. Although his calling it all along the kingdom of heaven, did clearly intimate, that it was not to be of this world, nor such a kingdom as they looked for: Howsoever, they could not but long much to see this kingdom, he spake of, come, and therefore were baptized of him, confessing their sins in order to it; until at length being fully convinced that *John* himself was sent from God, they began to suspect him to be the person they looked for: But that he utterly denied, *John i. 19, 20.* But assures them, that *he whom they looked for was coming after him, being much mightier than himself, Mark i. 7.*

JOHN the baptist having thus prepared the way, at length *Jesus of Nazareth* comes amongst others to be baptized of him; whom *John* conjectured at first sight to be the Christ; as appears from his saying to him, *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? Mat. iii. 14.* But afterwards he was thoroughly assured of it, when he saw the *Spirit of God descending from heaven like a dove, and abiding upon him, John i. 31, 32.* *Jesus* therefore being thus baptized by *John*, and known to him first to be the Christ; after forty days fasting in the wilderness, he begins to preach the gospel, as *Moses* had promulged the law after forty days fasting in the mount. And the first thing that he acquainted the world withal, was, that the kingdom which *John* had told them of, was now come. *The time, saith he, is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand:* That is, the time which was so long ago foretold by the prophets, and hath been so long looked for by you; it is now expired, it is now fulfilled, for the kingdom which you expect is at hand; I am come to lay the foundation of it, and settle it in the world. And having told them this, he acquaints them, that there are two duties, which now they must necessarily perform: The one, the same which *John* before had taught them, even *repent*: The other, that which they never before had heard of, even *Believe the gospel*: Believe the glad tidings which he then brought, of pardon and salvation through his blood; *repent, saith he, and believe the gospel.*

WHICH being the first command which our blessed Saviour laid upon mankind after he had taken upon him the office of Mediator for them; we, who expect happiness and salvation by him, cannot surely look upon it, but as a matter of more than ordinary importance, to understand the full meaning and purport of these words: especially, considering that if we take them in their largest extent, as he questionless intended them, they comprehend whatsoever he requires of us, in order to our partaking of the kingdom of God. So that if we do but *repent and believe the gospel*, in the sense wherein he commands us to do it, we need not fear, but in and thro him we shall be invested with as great glory and happiness, as our natures are capable of. Hence therefore I shall endeavour, by his assistance who spake them, to search out and explain unto you the true and genuine sense of these words, or what it is which our Saviour would have us to do, when he saith, *repent, and believe the gospel.* Taking them therefore as they lie in order: The first thing our blessed Saviour here enjoins us, is *to repent*; which being the first thing here required of us, we must have a great care; lest we be mistaken in the true notion of it, as many in

the world have been, and are still. But seeing our Saviour doth not only here command us to repent, but elsewhere tells us in plain terms, *That except we repent, we must all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3. it must needs be a matter of the greatest consequence imaginable, rightly to understand the nature of this duty: For though we may know it, and yet not do it; yet be sure we cannot do it, unless we know it. And therefore, that you may not err in a business of such importance as this is, I shall make it the work of this day, by the blessing of God, to shew you what really it is which our Saviour means, when he saith, *Repent*. For which end it will be necessary

IN the first place, to consider the word which our blessed Saviour expresses this duty by, which, in the language our Saviour spake these words in, was *απολ*, *Return ye*; but in the *Greek*, wherein his sayings are infallibly conveyed to us, it is *μετανοεῖτε*, which word, according to its proper etymology and notation, as well as the common use of it both in sacred and profane writers, doth properly signify the changing of the mind; and that usually from worse to better. And thus the author of the questions ascribed to *Athanasius*, explains τὸ μετανοεῖν, by μετατίθεσθαι τὸν νοῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν; The changing of the mind from bad to good. And therefore *Lactantius* and others after him, do rightly expound the *Greek*, *μεάνοισα*, by the *Latin*, *resipiscencia*; which properly signifies, the recovering ones self from some error which we were overtaken with: For he that repenteth of his error, *resipiscit*, is of another mind; that is, as the aforesaid father interprets it, *Mentem suam quaque ab insaniâ recipit*: He recovers his mind, as it were out of his former madness.

THUS our Saviour expresses the repentance of the prodigal son by coming to himself, *Luke xv. 17.* implying, that before that he had been besides himself, not in his right mind; but now he came to himself, and to the right use of his sense and reason, so as to be quite another thing, and of another and better mind than he was before.

THIS therefore being the true meaning of the word here used, it is easy to gather the true notion of the thing expressed by it. For first it is plain that our Saviour intended no such thing, as the Papists would wrest from these words, translating *μετανοεῖτε*, by *pœnitentiam agite*; and so would make the world, or at least their own credulous people, believe that our Saviour here enjoins us to do penance (for so in their *English* translation they render the word;) that is, in their notion, to make satisfaction to God for the sins we have committed, by some external punishment inflicted upon our bodies, either of our own accord, or else by the command of the priest, to whom we confess them. And this is that which they call, *The sacrament of penance*: Although if we take it in their own sense, yet there is neither any word of institution, or command, enjoining such a sacrament; nor yet is there any outward sign, to represent any invisible grace with it: Both which are absolutely necessary to the constitution of a sacrament. And besides that, to speak of making satisfaction to Almighty God for the sins we have committed against him, by undergoing only some outward chastisements for them; is such a piece of monstrous, if not blasphemous absurdity, that none can believe in Christ, and not tremble, to hear it asserted by them that profess to do so. For this is not only to derogate from the satisfaction which Christ himself hath made for us with his own most precious blood, as if it was not sufficient of itself without our adding something to it; but it makes as if our sins and rebellion against the great Creator and Governor of the world himself, were such little inconsiderable offences against him, that he cannot but in justice accept of a little corporal or pecuniary punishment, as a sufficient recompence and satisfaction for them. As if we could raze out our sins out of the book of God's remembrance, by whipping and scourging our own bodies; buy them off with a little money; or run from them, by going on pilgrimage to some saint or image; as if the outward punishments of finite creatures, could bear any proportion with the sins committed against an infinite God. I am sure the prophet was of another mind, when he said, *Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the high God*, &c. *Mich. vi. 6, 7, 8.* And therefore, it is not our garments or our bodies, but our hearts, that he commands us to rend, *Joel ii. 13.*

It is true, I do not deny, but that some outward expressions of our inward repentance, may be both well pleasing to God, and very useful to ourselves, to raise in us an higher detestation of those sins for which we can never sufficiently ab-

hor our selves. Thus by the foresaid prophet God calls upon the people, saying, *Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning*, Joel ii. 12. Thus Job abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes, Job xlii. 6. Thus the king of Nineveh, with all his people, upon the preaching of Jonah, fasted, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes; Jon. iii. 6, 7. But all these external actions are only the effects of true repentance, not of the nature or essence of it; for a man may do all these things, and yet not repent; and a man may repent, and yet do none of them. And tho they are certainly acceptable unto God when joined with repentance; yet without it they cannot but be very odious and abominable to him, as proceeding only from hypocrisy and deceit. And yet such external chastisements as these, joined with a little pretended contrition, is all that the popish confessors require of their penitents, as they call them, in order to their giving full and complete absolution from all their sins, as if they had done whatsoever God required of them in order to their pardon.

BUT, blessed be God, we have better learnt Christ: And therefore, though we cannot but acknowledge that fasting is of great use towards a true repentance and thorough conversion of our selves to God; not fasting upon fish, and wine, and sweetmeats as the papists do; but as St. Paul did, by keeping our bodies under, and bringing them into subjection, 1 Cor. ix. 27. Yet this, howsoever commendable in itself, and beneficial to them that rightly use it, is not that which our Saviour here enjoins under the name of repentance; tho it may be the product or consequent of it, and reckon'd among those which John baptist calls *The fruits of repentance*, Mat. iii. 8. But the repentance itself, which our blessed Saviour here speaks of, is seated only in the mind; as appears from the word itself, μετανοεῖτε, a word derived from μετα ἔνους, the mind, and so hath respect only to the inward motions of the soul, not at all to the outward actions of the body, any farther than as they depend upon, and are regulated by the mind and will. So that if we speak of repentance in its proper notion, it is certainly nothing else but the recovering our minds out of our former folly and distraction about the things of this world, into such a frame and disposition, as to be wholly averse from sin and evil, and inclined only to God and goodness. This is properly μετένοια, the changing our minds from evil to good.

HENCE therefore it is easy to observe, that in repentance properly so called, there are two things to be consider'd, as indeed in all motions and changes whatsoever, the *terminus a quo*, and the *terminus ad quem*; that which the mind turns from, and that which it turns to. That which it turns from, is sin and error; that which it turns to, is goodness and truth; and by consequence, God, the fountain, centre, and perfection of them. Thus the psalmist describes repentance, by *departing from evil and doing good*, Psal. xxxiv. 14. And the prophet, by *ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*, Isa. i. 16, 17.

THAT therefore you may understand the whole nature of repentance, we shall consider both the integral and essential parts of it: Whereof the first is, the aversion of our whole souls from sin and evil: For here, as elsewhere in scripture, by the mind, we are to understand the whole soul, with all its powers and faculties; which by our fall in Adam were so disordered, that they are naturally inclined to such things as they ought to be averse from, and averse from such things as they ought to be inclined to. Now, the taking off the bent and inclinations of our souls to sin and evil, is the first part of that duty which our Saviour here commands us, under the name of repentance. For the right performance whereof, there are these following particulars required.

FIRST, it is necessary that our minds be possess'd with a due sense of our manifold sins and miscarriages since we came into the world; as also of the guilt that we have contracted by them; so as to look every man upon himself as the greatest sinner in the world, being thoroughly convinced of the evil of his own ways. Neither is it enough that you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in general; but in order to your repentance it is necessary that you be sensible of those particular crimes which you know yourselves to be guilty of. As David was, when he said, *I acknowledge mine iniquity, and my sin is ever before me: Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*, Psal. li. 3, 4. Neither yet is it sufficient that you are sensible of some particular sins, but it must be of all that you can remember you have committed; whether sins of omission, or sins of commission; whether sins of ignorance, or sins of wilfulness; whether open or secret sins; whether

sins against the law, or sins against the gospel: And in the law, whether sins against the first, or sins against the second table; and that too, whether in thought, word or action. And surely, there is none of you but must needs be sensible that you have many a time and often offended in some, if not most or all these ways against the most high God that made you, whereby you have all incurred his displeasure, and deserved the severest of his wrath to be poured forth upon you. And this is the first step to true repentance; which should lead you,

IN the second place, to a godly sorrow, and hearty contrition, for those sins which you are thus conscious to yourselves that you have committed. Not such a sorrow as you have for the loss of relations, or for crosses and vexations in the world; but from quite different motives and principles, even because you by them have offended so glorious a God, displeased so gracious a Father, broken so righteous a law, abused the mercies of God himself, and so are liable to his wrath and indignation for ever. Thus the penitent prodigal went unto his father, and said, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son*, Luke xv. 21. *Job* xlii. 5, 6. And *David*; *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*; in the place before quoted. Thus, nothing should come so near our hearts, nothing should lie so heavy upon our spirits, nothing should be so vexatious and tormenting to us, as to consider what bowels of mercy we have spurned against; what a great and glorious, what a good and gracious God we have affronted, and so incensed against us; how ungrateful wretches we have been to him, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*. Which should make the remembrance of our sins so grievous to us, and the burden so intollerable, that we should be ready every moment to sink under it, but that we are supported by the consideration of his mercies and merits, whom we have offended. This is sorrow for sin indeed: Which, by consequence, must not be measured by the external expressions of it, as by tears or weeping, which are ordinarily moved more by external objects, than by such a kind of grief as is required in repentance; which may be, and often is, exerted in the soul without any bodily expression of it: Forasmuch as it is wholly the work of the mind, which may be sometimes overwhelm'd in itself, without the body's being any ways affected with it. Yea, commonly we see, the more inward any grief is, the less it appears outwardly; and the greater it is in itself, the less it is seen by others. Thus *David*, at the death of *Abshalom*, cried out, *Oh Abshalom, my son, my son; would to God I had died for thee! Oh Abshalom, my son, my son!* 2 Sam. xviii. 33. But we never find him using any such extraordinary passionate expressions about his sins: Tho' questionless he was infinitely more grieved for his sins against God than he was for the loss of his son. Which I therefore mention, because many that truly fear God, may be apt to suspect their repentance merely upon this account; because their grief for sin is not expressed with such external passions as they desire, as others seem to be. For this is no rule at all: But you must rather consult your own judgments and inclinations in the case. And if you find, that upon mature deliberation, you had rather for the future suffer the greatest affliction, than willingly commit the least sin; whether your grief for your former sins be accompanied with such sensible passions or no, you may conclude it to be sincere: For if you was not really troubled for your former sins, you would not be so fearful of sinning for the future.

AND this is the last thing required to this, the first part of our repentance: even that as we are convinced of, and humbled for our sins; so we must be steadfastly resolved against them, and to the utmost of our power and knowledge, leave and forsake them. And let me tell you, although sorrow for past sins be absolutely necessary to a true repentance; yet it is not repentance itself, as the apostle plainly shews, saying, *For godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of*, 2 Cor. vii. 10. And if godly sorrow work repentance, whatsoever influence it may have upon it, it must needs be distinct from it. Neither can that repentance, which needs not to be repented of, be any thing less than an hearty detestation of a steadfast resolution against a sincere conversion from whatsoever we know to be sinful, or contrary to the laws of God. And whatsoever comes short of this, how specious and plausible soever it may appear, it is but a mock repentance; that is, it is no repentance at all.

BUT seeing it is so dangerous to mistake in a matter of such consequence as this is, and yet nothing is more common than to be mistaken in it; I shall endeavour more fully and plainly to shew, that the repentance which our blessed Saviour here enjoins,

enjoins, consists in nothing less than a sincere forsaking of all known sin, unto the utmost of our power: For although it be impossible for a man to repent of his sins, if he be not first convinced of them, and humbled for them; yet it is possible and common for men to be both convinced of, and humbled for their sins, and yet not truly repent. *Pharaoh* could say, *I have sinned*, Exod. ix. 27. *Balaam* could say, *I have sinned*, Numb. xxii. 34. *Saul* could say, *I have sinned*, 1 Sam. xv. 24. Yea, *Judas* himself, when he had betrayed his Master, could say, *I have sinned*, Matth. xxvii. 4. Which confessions could not proceed but from an inward conviction, in their own consciences, that they were guilty of those sins which they were confessing, and yet were far enough as yet from true repentance. Thus also we read, how when *Elijah* the prophet had convinced *Ahab* of his sins, and told him the judgments which would be laid upon him for them; he humbled himself so, *that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went softly*, 1 Kings xxi. 27. Yet it doth not follow that he truly repented of his sins, being rather troubled at the judgments God had threatened against him, than for the sins himself had committed against God; and so he was rather *humiliatus* than *humilis*, rather humbled by God, than in himself. And so far the greatest hypocrite in the world may go, and yet remain an hypocrite still; as far from repentance as they that never pretended to it. And if this was all the repentance that God requires of us, *The way would not be so narrow, nor the gate so strait that leads to life*, as our Saviour himself says it is. If whipping our bodies would save our souls, or scourging our backs would mortify our sins, or going bare-foot was the way to go to heaven, none but fools and madmen would be kept out; nothing being more easy than to perform such external actions out of pride or hypocrisy, and yet continue in sin still. But do not mistake your selves, repentance is another kind of thing than this is: For it consists not in the correcting of the body, but the mind. It is *μετανοια*, the changing of our minds from evil to good, from sin to holiness, from the world to God. Thus Christ himself describes it, and thus you and I must practise it, if ever we desire to come to heaven. You must not content your selves with being a little grieved now and then for your sins: But if you would repent in good earnest, you must cut off your right hand, pluck out your right eye, and cast them from you; that is, you must hate your beloved sins, and be as much averse from them, as ever heretofore you have been inclined to them. For it is in this, that the very essence of true repentance doth consist, even in your minds and hearts being taken off from sin, and fixed upon God.

FROM which notion of repentance there are two things easy to be gathered; which I desire you to take special notice of, because they may be of extraordinary use, both to your clearer understanding of the true nature of repentance, and also to your comfort and direction in the practice of it. Whereof the first is this: That seeing repentance doth properly consist in the mind, and its averfeness from the evil which before it was bent upon; hence it necessarily follows, both that a man may leave many of the sins that he before lived in, and yet not repent; and, Secondly, on the other side, That a man may truly repent, and yet sometimes fall into sin too. First, I say, it follows from hence, that a man may leave off many of those sins which before he indulged himself in, and yet not truly repent of them. For repentance being seated principally in the mind, unless that be altered, whatsoever alteration there may be in the life and conversation, yet there can be nothing of true repentance in it. For, as the lopping off several branches from a tree, doth not necessarily kill the root; so neither doth the leaving off our former sins, as to the outward commission of them, necessarily infer, that the root from whence they sprang, even our inward lusts and corruptions, are at all mortified: But the heart may be as much inclined to them as ever, although the hands may be so tied, as not to be able to commit them. As for example: A man that hath lived a long while in drunkenness, whoredom, or the like, and afterwards falling into some sharp distemper, he cannot gratify his flesh any more with such sensual pleasures; but it doth not therefore follow that he hath repented of them: For tho he cannot if he would, yet he would, perhaps, if he could do it, now as much as ever. So supposing any of you, in your younger days, have used some unlawful means to get or increase your estates; and having now, by that means, gotten as much as you think sufficient, you leave off your former course of life, and by consequence the sins that you then allowed your selves in: But do you think, that this is repenting of them? By no means. For your heart may still be the same

as it was before: and if you had the same occasions and temptations now, as you had then, you might be as apt to fall into the same sins as you were before. And therefore, let me advise you to have a care of cheating yourselves in a matter of such moment as this is, so as to make yourselves believe you have repented, when in truth you have not. For howsoever reformed you may be in your lives, unless your hearts be reformed too, I should be a false prophet, should I tell you, that you have repented at all. And therefore, your chief care must be to get your hearts and affections renewed and changed, and then the reformation of your lives will follow in course. Do but clean the fountain, and the streams will soon run clear. But never think that you have repented of any sin, merely because you do not commit it now, as heretofore you used to do; but rather consider which way your pulse beats, and whether your hearts be still inclined to it or no, and whether you find your hearts so changed from it, that you hate it now, as much as ever you loved it; that you abhor it now as much as ever you did desire it; and that you are as really grieved for it now, as ever heretofore you took pleasure in it. And until you find such an alteration in your minds, let no alteration whatsoever in your lives fool you into a groundless persuasion, that you have repented: For I assure you, you have not.

AND then, in the second place, as a man may leave off some of his sins, and yet not repent of them; so on the other side, a man may have repented of his sins, and yet sometimes fall into them. For repentance being seated in the mind, although that may be so changed, that its general bent and inclination is towards God; yet that change not being absolutely perfect in this life, there is no man, how penitent soever he be, but may sometimes slip into sin, either by surprize and inadvertency, or else by being overpowered with the violence of some prevailing temptation; as is easy to be observed in most, if not all the saints that are recorded in holy scripture; especially in *David* and *Peter*: The first whereof did not only commit most horrible and atrocious crimes, but did it too with choice and deliberation; and the latter, *St. Peter*, was so overcome with fear at our Saviour's being apprehended, that he did not only deny him, but did it with oaths and curses; which was so dreadful a sin, that he, knowing his love to Christ, thought it before impossible he should fall into it, as appears from his peremptory asserting, *That tho all should be offended because of Christ, yet he would never be offended; yea, saith he, tho I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*, Mat. xxvi. 33, 35. And verily it is no wonder: For our repentance being but imperfect whilst we are here below, tho many so commit sin, as never to repent of it; yet there is none can so repent of sin, as never to commit it. Many have all sin, and no grace; but there is none hath all grace, and no sin. Many have no spirit to war against the flesh; but there is none but have flesh to war against the spirit. And therefore, altho in a true penitent the spirit for the most part hath the better; yet it is no wonder if the flesh, assisted by Satan, by some stratagem or other doth sometimes conquer.

BUT yet it is to be observed, that altho he whose mind is so chang'd, that he may properly be said to have repented, may notwithstanding relapse sometimes into his former sins; yet it is ordinarily with that reluctancy and unwilling willingness, as I may so call it, that impenitent persons are altogether strangers to. And altho it cannot be denied, but a truly pious man may have some sin which may be said to reign within him, because of the power and prevalency it may have over him; yet besure it doth not reign as a king, but as a tyrant and usurper, having no rest or quiet, but it is always molested and disturbed, or at least resisted and opposed, so that its commands are never observed, without either fraud or violence being used. For no man can be said to have repented truly, but he whose mind, heart, and affections, are turned from his sins to God: And therefore, altho such a one may sometimes stumble in his walk to heaven, be sure he'll soon get up again, and walk with more care for the future, and with circumspection. For whatsoever infirmities or miscarriages a sincere penitent may be guilty of, none can deserve that glorious title, but he whose mind is so changed from what it was, that he truly hates the evil which once he loved, and truly loves the good too which once he hated. And this brings me to the other part of repentance, even that whereby the mind is changed to that which is truly good, as well as from that which is truly evil.

BUT here give me leave to observe, that this cannot so properly be called another part of repentance, as another respect only under which repentance may be considered; which I have shewn is the reforming or changing of the mind from evil to good. But if it be changed from evil, it must needs be changed to good; it being evil not to be good. But howsoever, we may consider repentance, as it hath respect to good as well as evil. And so, certainly, as he who truly repents, cannot but be averse from whatsoever is evil, upon that very account, because it is evil; so he cannot but be inclined to whatsoever is good, upon that very account, because it is good. And therefore, as such a one would not willingly commit any known sin, so neither would he willingly omit any known duty: He will not only forsake whatsoever is offensive unto God, but he will perform whatsoever he knows to be pleasing to him; being now as much averse from sin, and inclined to God, as he was ever before averse from God, and inclined to sin. Thus the prophet shews exactly, how a wicked man should repent; saying, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, Isa. lv. 7.* And the prophet Joel, *Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, Joel ii. 13.* It is not enough to rend your hearts both for and from our sins, but we must also turn unto the Lord our God, so as to love the Lord with all our might and mind; and in obedience to him, to love our neighbour as ourselves. So that, in plain terms, repentance contains under it all the duties of the moral law; and whatsoever that enjoins us, either to God or man, our Saviour commands us to observe in this one word, *Repent.*

HAVING thus explain'd the true nature and notion of the duty here enjoined, we may consider in the next place, what was the reason wherefore our Saviour here puts repentance before faith, commanding us first to *repent*, and then to *believe* the gospel. To that I answer in brief thus: Our blessed Saviour had now taken upon him the office of Mediator betwixt God and man, to reconcile God to them, and them to God; and by consequence to be a propitiation for their sins, by making satisfaction to God's justice: By which means mankind is in and through him become capable of having their sins pardoned, and their persons accepted before God. This therefore was that great mystery, which upon his first entring upon his office he was to make known to us. But repentance being always required as necessary to our obtaining this mercy promised in the gospel, even the pardon of our sins; hence it was necessary that our blessed Saviour should first press this upon us, without which we cannot partake of the benefits and privileges which he hath purchased for us, and revealed to us in the gospel. For all the promises of pardon were still made with this proviso, that we first repent: As, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon, Isa. lv. 7.* And again, *Repent, and turn yourselves from your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin, Ezek. xviii. 30.* And so in many places. From whence it appears, that tho there be nothing of condignity or merit in repentance whereby it can deserve pardon at God's hand; yet God doth absolutely require it of us, in order to his pardoning our sins, because without this we are not rightly qualified for so great a mercy as this is; there being all the reason in the world, that he that hath done an injury should acknowledge his fault, be sorry for it, ask forgiveness, and promise amendment for the future, before he be pardoned.

REPENTANCE therefore being so indispensably required, in order to our pardon: Christ, when he came to purchase and seal our pardon with his own blood, thought it necessary to acquaint us before-hand upon what terms we are to expect it, even if we do repent. Hence he sent *John the Baptist* before him to preach, and say, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* And when himself appear'd publicly in the world, the first thing that he calls upon us to do, is to *repent*, and then to *believe the gospel*; that is, first to *repent*, and then to *believe* that in and through him we shall be pardoned. From whence we may observe, that we can have no ground to expect pardon, unless we repent; as considering, that altho it is not for our repentance that we shall ever be pardoned, yet we shall never be pardoned without it. There is no such virtue in our penitential tears, as to wash away either the guilt or filth of sin, there is nothing but the blood of Christ can do it: And yet the blood of Christ will never do it neither, unless we do repent. Not as if our repentance could add any virtue unto Christ's blood; but

but because the virtue of Christ's blood is neither imparted nor imputed without repentance. And hence it is, that our blessed Saviour here first commands us to repent of our sins, and then to believe in the gospel for the pardon of them: *Repent (saith he) and believe the gospel.*

WHICH things being duly consider'd, I hope I need use no other arguments to persuade you all to repent. For first, I suppose there are none of you here present, but must needs be conscious to yourselves of the manifold and great transgressions you have committed against the most high and mighty God, the only Creator and Governor of the world; by which means you have incens'd his wrath against you, and are every moment obnoxious to the dismal consequences and effects of it: Yea, by reason of your sins, you are all obliged to undergo nothing less than eternal torments. And therefore one would think, you should be all so apprehensive of the danger you are in upon the account of your sins, as to desire nothing in the world so much as to have them pardoned, and so your obligations to punishment cancel'd and taken off. And let me tell you for your comfort, that howsoever great and many your former sins have been, yet in and thro Christ they may all be pardoned. But let me tell you withal, that howsoever few and small your sins may seem to be, yet none of them shall e'er be pardon'd unless you repent. Christ's arms are ready to receive you, if you do repent; but if you do not, whatsoever he hath done and suffered for mankind, will stand you in no stead. And therefore, as ever you desire that he that made you would have mercy upon you, you must be sure to perform what he that redeemed you requires of you, even to repent.

BUT if such considerations as these are will not excite and stir you up to repent, consider in the next place how many obligations the eternal God hath laid upon you to repent; having linked your duty and interest so together, that as there is nothing can be more advantageous to you than repentance, so there is nothing that you are or can be more strictly obliged to perform. All the promises that he hath made unto you; all the threatnings he hath denounced against you; all the mercies he hath, entrusted with you; all the judgments he hath laid upon you; all the truths that he hath revealed unto you; and all the commands that he hath enjoined you; they all jointly and severally call upon you, and oblige you to repent: So that in all these as the apostle tells you, *The goodness of God leadeth you to repentance*, Rom. ii. 4. For what should make him so earnest with you to repent, as the scriptures shew him all along to be, but his own infinite and intrinsick goodness and mercy to you? What! Doth he need your repentance? Or will he receive any additions of glory from your services? No: Be it known unto you, he is infinitely happy in himself, without any thing that you can do. His glory is not eclipsed by your misery, nor advanced by your happiness. He loses nothing by your rebellions against, nor gains any thing by the services you can do and perform unto him. It is all one as to him and his felicity, whether you repent or no. And therefore he might justly suffer you to go on in your sins, without ever minding you of them, or calling you from them. But howsoever, as he is your Maker, he had rather exalt his mercy in saving, than his justice in condemning you; and therefore saith, yea sweareth by himself, *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Ezek. xxxiii. 11. How is it possible for one man to use more pathetic expressions with another, than here the eternal God uses to you? and all to shew how earnestly he desires you would all repent, that he might pardon and make you happy. For this end it is, that he sometimes terrifies you with his judgments, that he might affright you from your sins; and sometimes allure you with his mercies into the embracement of holiness. For this reason it is, that he hath annexed so many dreadful threatnings against the breakers of his law, and so many gracious promises to them that keep it. For this reason it is, that he hath given you his word to instruct you, his ordinances to direct you, and his sacraments to confirm you in your repentance. For this reason it is, that he still continues your lives unto you, that you might devote them to him in whom you live.

IN a word, for this end it is that he sent his Son to die for you, his Spirit to live within you, and me at this time to call upon you to repent. And if after all this you will still continue in your sins, and refuse to repent and turn unto the Lord your God, your blood be upon your own heads, for your destruction is from yourselves.

BUT

BUT if by any means I may be so happy, as to be an instrument in God's hand to persuade you all to perform what is here enjoined; let me desire you in the last place to consider, who it is who here commands you to repent: even no other person, but he who came to earth on purpose to shew you the way to heaven; yea; and laid down his own life to redeem yours: And therefore you may be sure, that he commands you nothing but what is really for your good. And if there had been any other way in the world to make you happy, questionless he would not have been so positive and peremptory in commanding you to repent; yea, so as to make this the first of all the commands he lays upon you. Neither hath he only commanded you to repent, but hath told you in plain terms, that unless you do repent you must all likewise perish, Luke xiii. 3.

IN his name therefore, give me leave to speak freely to you all. I know you all desire to be happy, and I hope you all expect to be so only by Jesus Christ. Now you have heard this day, what this very person requireth of you in order to your salvation, even to repent; and hath told you, you can never be saved, unless you do it: Tell me therefore, how can you expect that he would save you, unless you do that, without which, himself assures you that he will never save you, but you must inevitably perish? and therefore, as any of you tender the salvation of your immortal souls, let me advise and beseech you, in his name, to break off your former sins by repentance and conversion unto God. And think not to say within your selves, that God is infinitely merciful, and Christ's merits are all-sufficient; for tho they be so, you will never be the better for it, unless you repent, and be converted. And therefore, have a care of yourselves, put not off this work any longer, as heretofore you have done; give no rest to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids, until you be truly humbled for, and stedfastly resolv'd against your sins, all your sins, howsoever pleasing or profitable they have hitherto been unto you: So as for the future, by the assistance of God's grace and spirit, to walk in all the commandments of God blameless to the utmost of your power; and to exercise yourselves to have always a conscience void of offence, both to God and man. Do this, and then you'll have but one step to heaven; and that is, to believe the gospel.



S E R M O N LXXXIX.

Repentance and Faith, the two great Branches of
the Evangelical Covenant.

MARK i. 15.

— *And believe the Gospel.*

THE only reason why the Son of God came down to earth, being only to make way for the sons of men to go up to heaven, and to direct them to get thither: Hence we must needs conclude, that as whatsoever he did or suffered, so likewise whatsoever he said whilst here, was some way or other in order to the carrying on, and accomplishing, the greater end which he came into the world about. For as by his sufferings he hath made a way for us, so by his sayings he hath directed us how to walk in that way to heaven. And whatsoever he intended afterwards to say upon this subject, he was pleased at the first entrance upon his ministry, to give us the sum and substance of it in these words, *Repent, and believe the gospel.* For certainly there is nothing elsewhere taught by Christ, or necessary to be done by us, in order to our attaining everlasting happiness; but it may be easily reduced to, and is most clearly comprised under these words. And hence it is, that as our Saviour began his ministry with these words, so did he end it too with words to the same effect. For as when he first made his publick entrance into the world, himself preached, saying, *Repent, and believe the gospel*; so likewise, immediately before he left the world, in the last words that he spake to his disciples, he told them, *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name,* Luke xxiv. 47. But remission of sins in and through Christ, is the sum of all the gospel. And therefore, our Saviour here enjoins his apostles to follow the same method in preaching, which he himself had done before them: Even to preach repentance, and then *remission of sins in his name*; that is, to exhort and call upon people to *repent, and believe the gospel.*

THE apostles therefore having received this order and commission from their Lord and Master, Christ; accordingly, when the people said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Peter said unto them, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,* Acts ii. 38. As if he should have said, If you would needs know what you must do that you may be saved, first *repent*; and then, that your repentance may be accepted, *believe the gospel, and be baptized in the name of Christ, for the remission of those sins which you have repented of.* Thus also it was, that St. Paul preached the gospel; for he himself tells us, *That he testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,* Acts xx. 21. From whence it is plain and obvious, that these two were the general heads, which both our Saviour himself and his apostles, by his order and commission, insisted on in their preaching of the gospel, even *repentance, and faith in Christ.*

Now from this connexion of these two graces together, in the preaching of the gospel, we may observe three things: Whereof the *first* is, That under the gospel it self, repentance is indispensibly necessary to salvation. And therefore,

we must not think that Christ so died for sin, that we might still live in it; or that the gospel gives any encouragement in the world to vice and wickedness. No: It is so far from that, that the first duty that our blessed Saviour ever enjoined mankind, was to repent, and reform their lives. And the holy Ghost assures us, That Christ was sent on purpose to *bleſs us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. *Who his own ſelf bare our ſins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to ſin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. So that the grace of God which bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men in the goſpel, as the apoſtle tells us, teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world, Tit. ii. 11, 12. Yea, Chriſt gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works, verſe 14. Yea farther, the ſame apoſtle elſewhere tells us, that thoſe times of ignorance before Chriſt's coming, God winked at; that is, looked over them; not regarding them ſo much as to acquaint them with the goſpel, and to call them to repentance, as the word there uſed, *ὑπερδωκ*, properly ſignifies: But now, ſaith he, he commandeth all men every where to repent, Acts xvii. 30. So that the goſpel lays greater obligations upon us to repent, than ever the law did, in that it offers us greater aſſiſtances, preſents us with greater examples, and affords us greater encouragements; aſſuring us, that in and through Chriſt, the ſins which we repent of may be pardon- ed, and the good works we perform, accepted before God. And if, after all ſuch extraordinary overtures of grace and mercy as are made to us in the goſpel, we ſtill continue in our ſins; certainly it will be far more tolerable for *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* in the day of judgment, than for us. And therefore, do not think that Chriſt will patronize or connive at any of your ſins which you live in; or that he will ſave you, whether you repent or no. No: He himſelf hath told you before-hand that he will not; and therefore you may be aſſured of it, and conclude with your ſelves, that whatſoever Chriſt hath done and ſuffered for mankind, you will have no part nor portion in him, unleſs you repent; yea, ſo repent, as to be for the future as much averſe from ſin, and inclined to holineſs, as ever heretofore you have been averſe from holineſs, and inclined to ſin: So as to avoid whatſoever you know to be ſin- ful, and to the utmoſt of your power walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameleſs.

Secondly, FROM this connexion of faith and repentance, in the preaching of the goſpel, I obſerve alſo, That although repentance be abſolutely neceſſary to ſal- vation, yet it will avail us nothing without faith: Which I therefore obſerve, be- cauſe as ſome attribute all to faith, as if repentance was not at all required now; ſo others attribute all to repentance, as if faith was of no uſe in the goſpel it ſelf; or at leaſt, as if it was to be confounded with repentance, or repentance with it. Whereas nothing can be more plain, than that our Saviour himſelf, and his apoſtles after him, make a diſtinction betwixt repentance and faith, and yet make them both too abſolutely neceſſary to our obtaining the privileges of the goſpel. But not to enter into diſputes here: That man muſt be ſtrangely poſſeſſed with prejudices againſt believing, and the goſpel too, that aſſerts or thinks, that repentance, or obedience to the moral law, is ſufficient to bring a ſoul to heaven, without *be- lieving in the goſpel*. For this is not only to trample upon the blood of Chriſt, and make it of none effect; but it is alſo directly oppoſite to the words of our Saviour in my text, wherein he expreſly requires us to *believe in the goſpel*, as well as to *repent*. Yea, it is againſt the whole tenour of the goſpel, making as if it was nothing elſe but the moral law refined, and enforced with ſtronger arguments, and greater obligations to obedience, than it was before: Whereas nothing can be more plain than that the goſpel doth moſt clearly and ſtrictly require faith in Chriſt, over and above whatſoever is commanded or enjoined in the moral law. For thus, when the ruler came to our Saviour; ſaying, *Maſter, what ſhall I do to inherit eternal life?* Jeſus directed him to keep the commandments; ſaying, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*. The ruler replied, that this he had done from his youth: *All theſe things*, ſaith he, *have I kept from my youth*, Matth. xix. 20. Luke xviii. 21. But was this all which was needful for him to do? No, ſaith our Saviour, *Yet lackeſt thou one thing*: And what was that? *Sell all that thou haſt and diſtribute unto the poor, and come and follow me*, Luke xviii. 22. Where we may obſerve, that the one thing he lacked, was to go to Chriſt, and follow him; which ſeeing he could not do, until his heart and affections were looſed from the world, he therefore bids him ſell all things, and ſo manifeſt his repentance for his former covetouſneſs by his future

future charity, and then to follow him. So that our Saviour here gives the same advice to the young man, which in my text he gives to all; even first, *to repent*, and *keep all the commandments*; and then, *to believe the gospel*, or *follow Christ*. And if the former would have been sufficient without the latter, certainly our Saviour would never have told him that he lacked one thing, notwithstanding he had kept the commandments of God. Another instance of the like nature we have in *Cornelius*, whom the holy Ghost affirms himself to have been *a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the poor, and prayed to God alway*, Acts x. 2. Infomuch that God himself was pleased to send an angel to acquaint him in a vision, *That his prayers and his alms were come up for a memorial before God*, verse 4. From which testimony given unto him by God himself, we may most certainly conclude this person to have been as high a moralist as ever lived; God himself having given so high a character of him, both for his piety and charity. And yet, it seems this man lacked one thing too. For the angel, which was sent from God on purpose to do it, bids him *send to Joppa for one Simon, whose surname was Peter, and he shall tell thee*, faith he, *what thou oughtest to do*, ver. 5, 6. What he ought to do, may some say; what could *Cornelius* do more than he had done, being so devout, so pious, so charitable a man as he was, and that in the esteem of God himself? It is true, he was so. And yet we see *Peter* must be sent for, to tell him what he must do farther. And what *Peter* was to tell him, is plain from what he did tell him when he was come to him; even that he must believe in Jesus Christ: For to him, as *St. Peter* told him, *give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins*, Acts x. 43. From whence common reason will easily infer, that *Cornelius*, for all his repentance and good works, yet must believe too, or else he could not be saved. It is true, his alms and prayers were gone up for a memorial before God; or, as it is expressed, Acts x. 31. *They were had in remembrance in the sight of God*; that is, God was pleased to take special notice of them, so as to return him a suitable blessing for them; which was, to direct him how they might be accepted before him. For though God remember'd them, it is not said that he accepted of them: No; that could not be. For though they might be sincere, they were not perfect. Howsoever, God was pleased so far to remember them, as to send an angel to acquaint him, how he might come to the knowledge and faith in Christ, in whom they might be accepted. But seeing his devotion and repentance, howsoever remarkable, yet would not serve his turn without his believing in Jesus Christ; it is plain and manifest to the meanest capacity, that repentance of it self, although it include under it a sincere obedience to all the moral law, yet will not do our work, nor bring us to heaven, without faith in Christ.

IN the last place: From this connexion of these two duties together, I farther observe, that faith and repentance are equally necessary in order to salvation, though in divers respects: Repentance, because without it we cannot go to Christ; and faith, because without it we can receive no benefit from him. So that these two are like twins, are always to go together: neither indeed can they ever be said properly to be asunder, or one without the other: For without repentance, faith is nothing but a groundless presumption; and without faith, repentance is nothing at all, for it will stand us in no stead. And hence it is, that repentance and faith being so equally necessary in themselves, and so inseparable in their practice; hence, I say, it is, that either of them is sometimes in scripture put for both, or for whatsoever is required in order to our salvation. Thus, when *St. Peter* said to the *Jews*, *Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*, Acts iii. 19. It is plain, that repentance there includes faith, without which our sins will never be pardoned. But when *Paul* and *Silas* said to the keeper of the prison, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*, Acts xvi. 31. there faith doth as plainly include repentance, without which no man is or can be saved.

THERE being therefore such an inseparable connexion betwixt these two duties; hence it follows, that as they err on the one hand, who are altogether for faith without repentance, and good works; so they err too on the other hand, who are altogether for repentance and good works, without faith. And therefore, if we desire to go to heaven, we must be sure to keep the middle betwixt these two extremes. And what Christ hath joined together in his preaching, we must not put asunder in our practice. We must not only *repent*, but *believe the gospel*.

HAVING

HAVING thus considered both the nature of repentance, and its necessary connexion, with *believing the gospel*; it now remains that we seriously consider what this *believing of the gospel* is, or what it is that our Saviour would have us do when he bids us *believe the gospel*. And for the finding out of this, there are only two things to be considered: First, what this gospel is which we ought to believe; and then, what it is to believe this gospel.

As for the first; the word which we translate *gospel*, is *Εὐαγγέλιον*, which according to its notation and etymology, signifies *glad tidings*, or a *joyful message*; in which sense, it is used by heathenish as well as Christian writers. And indeed our *English* word *gospel* imports the same thing: For in the antient *Saxon* language, from whence our *English* comes; as *man* signifies both man and wickedness; so *God* signifies both God and good: And *spell* signifies a word, or message; and so *godspell* signifies both God's word, and a good message, or glad tidings; or, as we say, good news. And under this notion it is, that the prophets seem to speak of Christ, as of one that should bring glad tidings: *How beautiful upon the mountains, are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation!* Isa. lii. 7. And *behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings*, Nahum i. 15. Thus when the angel was sent to acquaint the shepherds with the birth of Christ, he reveal'd it to them under this notion; *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people*, Luke ii. 10. And what these good tidings were, is intimated in that celestial hymn which the choir of heaven immediately sang together, as soon as the aforesaid message was delivered; *glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men*, v. 14. And by whom this peace was come on earth, and good-will towards men, the angel teacheth in the foregoing verse; *For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*, v. 11.

THESE things being thus premised, if we consider the gospel simply of it self, and as it is distinct from the law, it may briefly be thus described: The gospel is the glad tidings of God's *good-will towards men* in their pardon, acceptance, and salvation by Jesus Christ. For the better understanding of which description, I shall lay down these following propositions.

FIRST: All mankind, by reason of their sins, are become obnoxious to the wrath of God, and eternal death; for as the law concludes all under sin, sin concludes all under wrath: So that the whole mass of mankind, and all particular persons contained under it, are, by the law of God, condemned to die the death which was threatened to the first transgressors of it, in whom the rest were all virtually comprehended; by which means, *all the world is become guilty before God*, Rom. iii. 19. that is, all the posterity of *Adam* is tainted with sin, and so is obliged to undergo the penalty of it: Which being nothing less than eternal death, it is that which we are all subject to, and bound to suffer.

SECONDLY: This death, which we were all obliged to suffer, the Son of God was pleased to suffer it in our steads, in our own nature assumed into his divine Person. This is that which the *Socinian* ear doth not love to hear of, and his mouth is continually exclaiming against: That Christ died, they cannot deny; but they would fain persuade the world, that he died for no other end, but only to confirm his doctrine, and for an example of humility, patience and self-denial to us. Which certainly no truly Christian ear can hear of without tingling: That the great God should suffer, nay, appoint his Son, his only begotten Son, in whom himself said *he was well pleased*, to die so shameful, so painful and cursed a death as he did, and all for no other end, but to do that again which he had done sufficiently before in his life and miracles. This is such an opinion, that we may justly wonder how any one should profess the christian religion, and yet at the same time assert this; which overthrows, or at least undermines, the very foundation of that religion which they do profess. For if this were the only reason and end of our Saviour's sufferings, then farewell all hopes of pardon and salvation. But, blessed be God for it, I think there is no one truth more clearly deliver'd in all the scriptures than this is, that Christ so died for us, and in our steads, as to satisfy God's justice for our sins, and so take off our obligation to the punishments which we were obnoxious to by them. For the apostle tells us expressly, that *Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*, Rom. iv. 25. That *he gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*, 1 Tim. ii. 6. That *he loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering for sin, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour*,

favour, Eph. v. 2. That he was a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world, 1 John ii. 2. That he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, as well as purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good Works, Tit. ii. 14. That it is in his blood that we have redemption, even the remission of sins, Eph. i. 7. That he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being himself made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. That he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. And the prophet saith, That he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and that by his stripes we are healed, Isa. liii. 5. and that the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all, v. 6. Yea, and Christ himself tells us expressly, that he came to give himself a ransom for many, Matth. xx. 28. *λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν*, a ransom instead of many, as the words most plainly import. Now, how is it possible, that Christ's dying for our sins, and so to redeem us from the death we were liable to, could be expressed in more perspicuous terms than these are? And all to confirm us in this great truth, that Christ dying for us, hath thereby undergone the punishment which was due to us for our sins against God.

HENCE, in the third place, in and through Christ we are made capable of pardon, acceptance and salvation: Yea, none of us can miss of it, that will but perform the easy conditions required in order to it. We may have our sins pardoned; that is, our obligations to death and punishment cancelled, and taken off; because he hath paid the debt, and undergone the punishments which were due to us. And as our sins may be pardoned, so may our persons be accepted as righteous in and through him: Not for any inherent righteousness in our selves; for as the prophet tells us, *our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags*; but by the righteousness of Christ ascribed or imputed to us. So that although our persons be not so righteous, nor our actions so perfect, as the law of God requires; yet if we sincerely endeavour to do our duty to God and man, God will accept of our sincerity in and through Christ, instead of perfection, and so accept both of our persons and performances as righteous, although they be not so in themselves; which certainly he would never do, was it not for the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us. And this is that which the scriptures call our *justification before God*; even when God is pleased to accept of us, and of what we do in and through his Son Jesus Christ. For, as when our sins were imputed to him, he was crucified for them; so when his righteousness is imputed to us, we are justified by it. And being justified in time, we cannot but be glorified for ever: For *whom he hath justified*, saith the apostle, *them he hath also glorified*, Rom. viii. 30.

IN the last place therefore: These glad tidings which our Saviour brought to the world, of our pardon, acceptance, and salvation in and through him, is that which himself here calls the gospel, and commands us to believe. Glad tidings indeed! that the eternal God should have that pity and compassion towards us, as to send his only Son to die for us, and so to redeem us from that death which was due unto us! Glad tidings indeed! that such sinful persons as we at the best are, and such imperfect actions as we at the best do, should be accepted of by the most holy God himself! And yet there is none of us, but ours may be so, if we will but sincerely perform, unto the utmost of our power, what Christ himself requires of us in order to it; even *repent*, and *believe this gospel*.

HAVING thus examined what the gospel is, which we are to believe in; we are now to consider, what it is to believe in this gospel. A thing, which it must needs behove you all rightly to understand, forasmuch as your eternal salvation depends upon the practice of this one duty: For *he that believeth in Christ, is not condemned*; but *he that believeth not, is condemned already*, John iii. 18. *There is no name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Christ*, Acts iv. 12. Neither is there any way appointed for us to be saved by Christ, but only by believing in him. It is true, our repentance doth qualify us for pardon and salvation; but it cannot purchase or obtain it for us. There is no such virtue in the tears of repentance, as to wash away the guilt of sin; neither can the fig-leaves of our own righteousness hide our nakedness from the eyes of an all-seeing God. *Moses* may, and should, lead us through the wilderness; but it is only *Joshua*, or *Jesus*, can carry us into *Canaan*. The moral law must direct our steps; but it is the gospel only that can save our souls. So that if we ever desire to sail into the haven of eternal happiness, it must be through the blood of Christ; by whom alone it is that our former sins can be pardoned, our present lusts subdued, our persons justified before God here, and our souls glorified with

him hereafter. And as it is only by Christ that we can be saved, so we cannot be saved by him without faith: Nothing that we do will please God; and without faith, nothing that Christ hath done will profit us: His wounds will not heal us, nor his blood cleanse us; his merit will not be imputed to us, nor his Spirit implanted in us, unless we believe in him. And therefore if ever we desire to partake of what Christ hath done and suffered, merited and procured for mankind, we must be sure to believe in his gospel aright. Which, notwithstanding, we can never do, until we first know what it is to do so: which I shall therefore endeavour to explain unto you at this time, with as much brevity and perspicuity as possibly I can.

Now for our right understanding our Saviour's pleasure in commanding us to believe his gospel, we must first know the nature of faith in general; for otherwise we can never rightly apprehend the nature of that particular faith which is here required of us. Faith therefore, or belief in general, is nothing else but the assent of the mind to what is attested by another, grounded upon the authority of him that doth attest it. Where, by the assent of the mind, I mean that act or habit of the understanding, whereby it receiveth and acknowledgeth any thing as a truth. And then I call it, the assent of the mind to what is attested by another, to distinguish it from other assents which cannot come under the notion of faith, as having different objects from it. For things that are apparent in themselves; as, that the whole is greater than any part of it; or are evident unto sense: such things, tho I assent to them, yet such an assent cannot properly be called faith, or believing; because the things I assent to, are not only credible, but apparent, either to my sense or understanding, without the testimony of any other. So also for truths, which tho not apparent in themselves, yet appear to be so by discourse and ratiocination; altho I assent to them, yet I cannot so properly be said to believe them, as to know them: and such an assent is not faith, but science. For faith hath nothing for its object, but what is attested by another; and by consequence, as I added in the description of it, it is grounded upon the authority of him that attests it, without being apparent in it self, or to sense or reason. So that in faith properly so called, there is nothing that moves our assent, but only the credit or authority of him that testifieth that which we believe; and we therefore only believe it, because he attests it, and so far as he attests it. And hence it is, that our assent to what is propounded to us by another, is always stronger or weaker, according as the authority of him that propounds it seems greater or less to us. And the authority of him that propounds any truth to be believed, depends upon his known ability in knowing the truth of what he propounds, and upon his honesty in propounding it according to his knowledge. And therefore, what men assert for truth only upon their own testimony, I can never give a full and perfect assent to it, because the knowledge of men is imperfect, and their hearts deceitful; they may be deceived themselves, or else may have a mind to deceive one. And by consequence, there can be no infallible ground for an human faith; that is, for such a faith as is built upon the testimony of men, which are in themselves fallible.

BUT now, in matters divine we have the testimony of one, whose authority is altogether unquestionable, even of God himself; who being infinitely wise, it is impossible for him to be deceived himself; and being infinitely good too, it is as impossible for him to deceive others. And therefore, whatsoever he asserts or testifies, we have an infallible ground to believe or assent unto it. And this is that which we call a divine faith; even when we assent to any truth only upon the testimony of God himself; which is most certainly the highest kind of faith which we can possibly exert, because it hath an infallible testimony for the ground and foundation of it.

THESE things being thus premised, it is easy to find out what is the first act of that faith which our blessed Saviour here enjoins us to have in the gospel, or glad tidings which he brought into the world. For seeing he was sent from God himself to preach the gospel, and himself too that preach'd was truly God, it necessarily follows, that he here requires such a faith in the gospel, as is grounded upon the testimony of God himself; that is, a divine faith, assenting to what is delivered in the gospel, in a manner suitable to the authority of him that deliver'd it: and by consequence more firmly than we do to any thing that we see, or hear, or know, by arguments and discourse of reason; because our senses are fallible, and so is our reason too: But God, we know, is perfectly infallible; and therefore what he asserts, we are not only bound to believe it because he asserts it, but we are bound

bound also to give the highest assent to it that is possible to be given to any assertion whatsoever; so as to believe it impossible it should be otherwise than he asserts it. And that we are thus to believe the gospel upon the infallible testimony of God himself, St. *John* doth plainly attest, saying, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: For this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: He that believeth not the Son, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, 1 John v. 9, 10, 11.* That God hath given us eternal life in his Son Christ, is the sum of all the gospel. But for this, saith the apostle, *we have the record or testimony of God himself; and therefore whosoever doth not fully assent unto and believe this, he hath made God a liar.* And therefore he that would believe the gospel aright, he must not only assent unto it as a thing probable, which may or may not be true; but he must believe it as a thing infallibly true and certain, because attested by an infallible authority.

Now, in the next place, although I call such an assent as this is but the first act of that faith which our Saviour here requires in the gospel; yet if it be rightly exerted, it will necessarily produce whatsoever is requir'd to our believing in the gospel, so as to be interested in all the benefits and privileges of it. For he that firmly and stedfastly assenteth unto this proposition, that God upon our repentance will pardon, accept and save us, in and through Jesus Christ; cannot but trust and confide in the same Jesus Christ for his pardon, acceptance and salvation, because he hath the infallible word of God, that in and through Christ he will do it for us. And in this, doubtless, consisteth the very essence of saving or justifying faith; even in trusting and relying upon Christ alone for pardon and salvation, so as to expect it from him, and from none but him. And hence it is, that our Saviour himself delights to express our believing in him, by coming to him; as, *He that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me, shall never thirst, John vi. 35.* And all that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out, v. 37. And elsewhere, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, Mat. xi. 28.* From whence we may observe, that the faith which our Saviour requires, is not such a light assent which swims only in the brain, but such a firm and solid assent as sinks into the heart, and there moves and inclines the will to Christ; so as to put the soul upon going to Christ, and resting upon him for pardon and acceptance with the most high God. Thus we find St. *Paul* giving us a very remarkable instance of his faith in the gospel, when he triumph'd so much in what Christ hath done and suffer'd for us, that he matter'd nothing that can be done against us; saying, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, &c. Nay in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, &c. Rom. viii. 33, 34, 35, 37, 38.* Where we may observe, not only the strength, but the nature of his faith too; even that it was such a faith as made him so confident of the pardon of his sins, and of the love of God towards him in Jesus Christ, that he defied all opposition that could be made against him; being fully persuaded, that nothing could separate him from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

But the main stress of our salvation lying upon our right performing this duty, give me leave to explain it a little farther to you. There are but two ways, you know, whereby it ever was or will be possible for mankind to remain or become happy; whereof the one was, by performing universal and absolutely perfect obedience to the moral law, so as not to offend in the least circumstance or punctilio of it. And this was called *the covenant of works*: The tenor whereof ran thus; *Do this, and live.* But man having made himself incapable of ever attaining unto happiness this way, God was pleased to find out another way; and that was, to erect, as it were, a court of *Chancery*, to mitigate the rigor of the common-law: Which he did, by sending his own Son to take the nature of mankind in general upon him; and in that, to do and suffer whatsoever mankind was obliged to: Who therefore in our nature thus assumed into his divine person, having in his life performed perfect obedience to the moral law, and in his death undergone all the punishment that was due to sin, and all for us, and in our steads; hence God is pleased

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not only to pardon our former sins, by reason of Christ's satisfaction for them, and so to accept of his death instead of ours; but likewise by reason of that perfect and exact obedience, which he in our nature hath fulfilled to the moral law, God is pleased for his sake to accept of our sincere endeavours, in lieu of that perfect obedience which before was due from us, as absolutely necessary to our being justified before God. So that if we do but sincerely endeavour to do what we can, altho it be not so exact as the law requires; yet God for Christ's sake will accept of what we do, and enable us for the future to do more. And this is that which is called the *covenant of grace*, the *gospel*, and the *new testament*; all which are but equivalent terms, denoting God's accepting of Christ's passion and perfection instead of ours.

Now, all that God requires of us, in order to his accepting our sincerity in lieu of perfection for Christ's sake, is only to take his word for it; to trust and depend upon the promises which he hath made to this purpose in Jesus Christ; and on Christ too, in whom they were made, and in whom alone they are confirmed and performed to us. And this is indeed the proper notion of *believing the gospel*, or *believing in the gospel*, as the words, *πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ*, import; even so to believe the glad tidings which God hath sent to mankind, of pardon, acceptance and salvation, in and through Jesus Christ, so as to rely and depend upon him, and him alone for it: Doing what we can, and yet not trusting in what we do, but only in what Christ hath done and suffered for us: Sincerely endeavouring to obey the law unto the utmost of our power, and yet not relying upon our own obedience, but only on Christ's merits for our acceptance before God. Thus St. Paul acted his faith in the gospel, when he tells us, that *as touching the righteousness which is of the law*, he was *blameless*, that is, as to his outward conversation, *Phil. iii. 6*. And yet he presently adds, *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, ver. 7, 8, 9. In which words, you have as clear an instance of believing in the gospel, as words are able to express. For here we see, that altho his obedience to the law was so exact, that as to any outward appearance he was blameless; yet howsoever he placed no trust or confidence at all in that, but counts it as nothing without Christ. And therefore desires to be found in him, *not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ*. So that he renounced plainly his own righteousness, and trusted only in another's, even in the righteousness of Christ; which being imputed, or made over to us only by faith, he therefore calls it the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ. And it is only by this righteousness that we are justified, that is, accepted as righteous before God; and not by the righteousness which is of the law, as the same apostle expressly tells us, saying, *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law*, *Rom. iii. 28*. And for any one to say, as some have done, that by the law here we are to understand not the moral, but only the ceremonial law; this is directly contrary not only to the design, but the very words of the apostle here; who having asserted our justification not by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ; he presently adds, *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law*, ver. 31. Which plainly argues, that the apostle here speaks only of that law which is established by faith, which can be no other but the moral law. And therefore, tho the apostle here doth still assert our obedience to the moral law as necessary, yet he denies that we are or can be justified by it; because in the rigour of justice, God cannot accept of our persons or actions as righteous by virtue of our obedience to the moral law, by reason of our manifold imperfections and deviations from the rules of justice: Upon which account therefore, the apostle justly excludes our moral righteousness from the matter of our justification, ascribing it wholly and only to faith in Christ, whereby our sincerity is accepted of in lieu of perfection, and our persons are accepted of as righteous by virtue of Christ's righteousness imputed to us. And by consequence, our natures are made holy here, and our souls happy for ever. For this necessarily follows upon our justification before God, and reconciliation to him. And therefore, altho faith be certainly distinct from good works; yet it can never be without them, nor they without it: no works being accepted

of as good, but in and thro Jesus Christ. And whosoever doth not believe, and trust in Jesus Christ alone for the acceptance, both of himself, and what he doth before God, neither himself, nor his actions, will be ever accepted of as righteous by him; this being the only way whereby we can partake of the merits of Christ's death and passion, even by believing and confiding in the promises of the gospel, that our former sins upon our repentance shall be pardoned, our future obedience accepted, and so our souls eternally saved, upon the account of what Jesus Christ hath done and suffered for us; which we have certainly all the reason in the world to believe and confide in, having the infallible word and promise of God himself for it.

HAVING thus explained the text which our Saviour first preached upon, and that which was the sum and substance of that religion which he hath established in the world, even *repent, and believe the gospel*: From what you have heard upon this subject, it is easy to gather what is necessary to be done, in order to your salvation; which that you may the better understand, I shall present you with it in few terms.

SUCH therefore amongst you as sincerely desire to go to heaven, take but this course, and you cannot miss of it.

First, WHATSOEVER sins you know your selves to have been guilty of, and lived in, you must be sure so to repent of them, as to be humbled for them, and forsake them. And do not say, that you know nothing by your selves which you need be troubled for, or turn from: For I dare say, there are none of you but are conscious to your selves, that you have either lived in the neglect of some known duty, or else in the frequent commission of some known sin, which you must either leave, or else you are never likely to come to heaven.

Secondly, HAVING gone so far, as truly to repent of, and leave your former sins; the next thing is to resolve and purpose with your selves, by the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, to perform sincere and universal obedience to all the moral law. For God himself hath told you, that *without holiness no man shall see his face*, Heb. xii. 14. And therefore, as ever you desire to be happy hereafter, you must sincerely endeavour, unto the utmost of your power, to be holy in all manner of conversation here. There is no help for it; you must either devote your selves wholly to God's service, or you will never enjoy his presence and favour.

Lastly, HAVING thus sincerely forsaken your former sins, and stedfastly resolved upon future obedience, you must be sure, moreover, *to believe the gospel*; that is, humbly to confide and trust, that in and through Jesus Christ those sins you have now repented of shall all be pardoned, and that the sincere obedience which for the future you shall perform, will be accepted before God; and by consequence, that your persons shall be justified, or accounted righteous by him, not for your own, but for Christ Jesus sake, whom also you must depend upon for such influences of his grace, as may enable you both to obey the law, and believe his gospel. And that you may the better enure your selves to believe in the gospel, always follow the apostle's rule: *And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, Col. iii. 17. Whatsoever acts you perform, either of piety towards God, or of justice and charity to your neighbour, conform them all as near as possibly you can unto the laws and commands of God: and yet perform them too in the name of Christ, so as to believe them to be accepted only upon his account. Thus our Saviour assures you, *That whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in his name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. And elsewhere, *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark xi. 24. From whence it is plain, that we are to pray only in the name of Christ, believing that in and thro him our prayers shall be accepted, otherwise they will not. The same may be said of all other duties, so as to do whatsoever is commanded us as exactly as we can; and when all is done, depend upon Christ, and him alone, for the pardon of our sins, acceptance of our persons and performances, and so for the salvation of our immortal souls. By this means, you will both *repent, and believe the gospel*, and so walk in the ready road to heaven.

THUS I have endeavoured in as few terms, and as much clearness as the nature of the thing was capable of, to unfold unto you the great mystery of man's salvation by Jesus Christ, upon these easy terms of *repenting, and believing the gospel*. What now remains, but that knowing the way how to get to heaven, you should

resolve upon the practice of it, without which, your knowing of it will avail you nothing. And let me tell you, the way which I now described, even by repentance, and faith in Christ, many thousands are now become so many glorified saints in heaven, which once were sinful creatures upon earth, as we now are. And if you will but do as they did, you may be e're long where they are. And therefore, let me beseech you not to think it enough, that you have heard how to get to heaven, but from this day forward, set your selves seriously upon the practice of it. Repent, repent of all your sins, and turn again unto the Lord your God, and serve him for the future with a perfect heart, and a willing mind, and then believe in Christ for your pardon and acceptance; and you have the word of God for it, that *you shall be saved.*

S E R M O N X C .

Holiness the great Design of the Gospel-Dispensation.

TITUS ii. 11, 12.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men;

Teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

AMONGST the many excellent and divine sayings which proceeded from our Saviour's mouth when he was here upon earth, and are still left upon record for us to know and consider, I know nothing more sharp and severe than that short sentence of his, that *many are called, but few chosen*, Matth. xxii. 14. The consideration whereof cannot surely but cut us to the heart, especially if we remember likewise who it was that said it, even that very person which came into the world on purpose to lay down his own life to ransom and save ours. And that he should say, that for all those horrid blasphemies, those bitter agonies, that cruel death which he hath undergone for mankind, yet but few of them should be chosen to salvation; yea, that of those very persons who are called to partake of it, but few are chosen to it; this is such a thing that no man can seriously consider it but it must needs startle and awake him from his security, and make him look about him, and bethink himself how he may be in the number of these few which are chosen and saved by Christ. And verily it is a great comfort to us that though there be but few, there are some chosen; especially considering that you and I also are as capable of being in the number of those few, as any other whatsoever, and it is our own faults if we be not; for we are all beset in the number of the many which are called, we are all invited to accept of the

the grace and pardon which is offer'd us in the gospel. But if we refuse to answer when we are called, and will not come up to these easy terms which are proposed to us in the gospel, and so exclude our selves from being chosen, whom can we blame but our selves for it? As, suppose an earthly prince having a company of stubborn and refractory subjects under him, they with one consent rise up and rebel against him; but his only Son having appeased his wrath, and interceding for them, he is pleased to send his heralds to proclaim peace and pardon to all that will lay down their arms, and return to their obedience again, otherwise he will use the rigour of his laws against them, and inflict the severest punishments that he can upon them: And if they remain so obstinate as not to accept of their prince's favour, you'll all acknowledge that they deserve the height of his fury and displeasure.

THE case is clearly our own. We and all mankind have rebelled against the universal monarch of the world; we have broken his laws and refused to submit to his government and authority over us, by which means we have incurred the severest of his displeasure against us. But his only begotten Son having made atonement, and still interceding for us, he is pleased to send his servants and ministers to proclaim pardon to all that will cease from their rebellious and treasonable practices against him, and for the future pay their just homage and obedience unto him; and to assure us withal, that all such persons as will not come in and lay hold upon that mercy and favour which is offered them, shall be proceeded against with all the severity imaginable, as traytors and rebels to the King of heaven. And therefore if we still stand out, and will not accept of the gracious offers which are made unto us, whatsoever punishment should be inflicted upon us, we must even thank our selves for it. For if we be not in the number of the chosen as well as of the called, it is only because we will not perform those things which we are called to; for this is most certain, that he who doth what the gospel requires, cannot but attain whatsoever is promised in it, the promises being altogether as faithful as the commands are just. So that if we do but observe those rules which the gospel lays down before us, all the good things which are promised in it, shall most faithfully be conferred upon us. What those good things are which are promised in the Gospel, I need not tell you; for you cannot but know your selves that there is nothing desirable or needful to make men happy, but what Christ in his gospel offers to all such as believe and obey him, by whom we may have our sins all pardoned, our persons justified, our duties accepted, our God reconciled, our lusts subdued, our hearts adorned with grace in time, and our heads crowned with glory to eternity. So that in and through Christ, there is never a soul here present, but may hereafter set down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* in the kingdom of heaven, and be made *ισαήλ*, like or equal to the angels themselves in glory, happiness, purity and perfection.

BUT the great question is, What it is which the gospel requires of us in order to our partaking of such glorious and transcendent privileges as these are. For nothing can be more certain than that all those who hear and profess the gospel shall not receive any real benefit or advantage by it, no more than as if Christ had never died, or his Gospel had never been preached amongst them. But this cannot be imputed to the gospel it self, but only to some defect in them that hear it, because they come not up to the terms which are proposed, nor perform such duties as are commanded in it, without which no man can have any interest at all in any one promise made therein to mankind. And therefore, as ever we desire to partake of those glorious things which are propounded and offered to us in the gospel, we must be sure to observe such rules as the gospel hath prescribed in order thereunto. And that you may clearly understand what these are, I have chosen these words to explain unto you, wherein they are as fully and plainly discovered to us as words could do it. *For the grace of God which bringeth salvation, &c.*

WHICH words therefore containing matter of so great and necessary importance to us all, in speaking to them, I shall not discourage your attention with raising any intricate or impertinent observations from them, but shall endeavour to explain them as briefly and clearly as possibly I can unto you, and that too, in the same order wherein they lie, that so the meanest capacity in the congregation may apprehend the true meaning and purport of them.

First, THEREFORE, by the *grace of God*, we are here to understand God's infinite love and mercy to mankind, in sending his Son into the world to die for us, as it is revealed

revealed to us in his gospel, which is therefore call'd *εὐαγγέλιον τῆ χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, the gospel of the grace of God, Acts xx. 24. and *λόγος τῆ χάριτος αὐτοῦ*, the word of his grace, ver. 32. And for this reason it is that it is called *εὐαγγέλιον*, glad tidings, because it is in the gospel that God hath revealed or made known to mankind his undeserved grace and favour, in the pardon, acceptance and assistance of all such persons as sincerely repent of their sins, and believe in Jesus Christ. And by this it is that the gospel is distinguished from the law. The law requires exact and perfect obedience from us, unto every punctilio and circumstance of it, and threatens death and destruction to every one that doth not punctually observe every thing prescribed in it. But the gospel is as 'twere a court of *Chancery*, that mitigates the rigour of the common law, accepting of our sincerity instead of perfection, and promising pardon and forgiveness to all such as sincerely endeavour to do what they can, and trust in the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, for the acceptance of what they do. By which means we are all now in a capacity, tho not of performing perfect obedience, yet of performing such an obedience as for Christ's sake may be accepted of in lieu of perfect; which is certainly the highest act of grace and favour that could possibly be shewn to mankind, we being now put into a way of being restored to that happiness which by our sins we are fallen from; so that our sins may be all pardoned, our persons justify'd, our duties accepted, and so our souls eternally saved. And hence it is that this grace of God to mankind, thus clearly revealed to us in the gospel of Christ, is here called, *The grace of God which bringeth salvation*; which is the second expression to be considered.

THE grace of God which bringeth salvation, the *χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ*, the *σωτήριον*, the saving grace of God, as the words may be expounded; that is, that grace of God whereby alone it is possible for mankind to be saved: So that our salvation here is wholly attributed to the grace of God, yet so as not to exclude either Christ's satisfaction for us, or our duty and obedience to God.

I. I SAY, the grace of God doth not so bring salvation as to exclude the satisfaction of Christ for our sins, and not so as if our salvation was to be ascribed wholly and solely to the free grace and mercy of God, without any respect at all to the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ. For if so, to what purpose did Christ die at all? What need he have assumed our human nature, and suffered so much as he hath done in it, if our sins might be pardoned, and our souls saved without it? Certainly he that seriously considers who Christ was, what he did, and how much he underwent for mankind, cannot but acknowledge that his death was of indispensable necessity in order to our life and happiness, or otherwise he would not have undergone it; inasmuch that though we are not to dispute the infiniteness of God's grace and power, yet all things being duly considered, I do not see how it was possible for fallen man to be restored to happiness without the death and sufferings of Christ for him. For God having expressly said to Adam, and in him to all mankind, *Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, Gen. ii. 17. and it being impossible for God to lie, or not to do according as he hath said; hence it necessarily follows that death must be inflicted upon mankind, at least upon the general nature of man, as it was then contained wholly in the first Adam; and by consequence, that unless Christ had suffered that death in the nature of man, which was then threatened to it, all mankind partaking of that nature, must of necessity have undergone it in their own persons, or else the word that proceeded out of God's mouth would not have been fulfill'd. And upon this account it is that Christ is called our Saviour, and asserted to have saved us from death, to have redeemed us from our sins, and to be the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world, 1 John ii. 2. Yea, Christ himself saith, that he came to give his life a ransom for many, *λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν*; a ransom instead of many, Matth. xx. 28. where the word *λύτρον*, or ransom, properly signifies *redemptionis pretium*, the price which is given for the redemption of captives. And therefore our Saviour saying, that he came to give his life, *λύτρον*, or a ransom, or price of redemption for many; it plainly argues that he paid, as it were, something for us, whereby to redeem us from the slavery of sin and Satan, by undergoing the death which we were obnoxious to, and so making full and complete satisfaction to the justice of God for us: he having suffered infinitely more for us than it was possible for our selves ever to have

done in our own persons. From whence it necessarily follows, that when it is here said that the grace of God bringeth salvation; our salvation is not so attributed to the grace of God, as to exclude the merits and satisfaction of Christ.

AND then, *Secondly*, as the grace of God that bringeth salvation doth not exclude the satisfaction that Christ hath made for us, so neither doth it exclude the duties and obedience which we owe to God. But altho we must acknowledge that our salvation is to be ascribed to the free grace and infinite goodness and mercy of God to mankind; yet we are as much obliged or bound to obey the moral law, and to perform whatsoever is requir'd in it, either to God or man, as if we were to be saved by our obedience, without respect either to God's grace or Christ's merits; because it is by this that we are qualify'd for that salvation which the grace of God in Christ hath brought to us, insomuch that our salvation depends upon that too as *causa sine qua non*, as without which we shall never be saved. And therefore as it is a dangerous and mischievous doctrine to assert, that our obedience or good works can merit any thing at the hand of God, or bring us to heaven without faith in Christ; so on the other side, it is a fond and ridiculous opinion, to fancy that either God's love, or Christ's death for mankind, hath taken off any of our obligations to obedience, as if we were not as much or more obliged to obey God now we are in a capacity of salvation, than we were when our obedience would stand us in no stead at all, as without the grace of God in Jesus Christ, it would not. Besure the apostle here was quite of another mind; even that the grace of God bringing salvation to mankind, is so far from encouraging us in vice and wickedness, that it teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, &c. as I shall endeavour to shew more fully when I come to those words.

IN the mean time having seen how these words, *The grace of God which bringeth salvation*, are not to be understood, even not so as to exclude either Christ's merits, or man's duty; we are now to consider positively, in what sense the grace of God is here said to bring salvation. Why, in few terms, our salvation is here attributed to the grace of God as the first moving cause of it: whatsoever hath or can be done in order to our salvation being still from the infinite grace and love of God. For when all mankind were become guilty before him, he might justly have left them in the same condition with the fallen or apostatized angels, without any hopes of pardon or mercy from him, or without ever putting them into a way of recovery from sin and misery. But he was pleased of his infinite and essential goodness, to have so much pity and compassion on fallen man, as to find out a way how to raise him up again; which can be ascribed to nothing else but to his own free grace, and altogether undeserved mercy to us. And hence it is that whatsoever hath been done in order to man's salvation, is all along in scripture resolved into the grace and love of God towards us. As for example; Did God send his Son into the world to die for us? He did so: But wherefore did he do it? Was it because mankind had deserved so great a favour at his hands? No: It was only of his infinite love and mercy towards us. *Herein is love*, saith the apostle, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*; 1 John iv. 10. And Christ himself assures us of the same, *John* iii. 16. Did Christ the Son of God come down, to lay down his own life to redeem ours? What should move him to so strange and astonishing a condescension as that was? Nothing certainly could do it, but his own intrinsick love and compassion towards us. *I live*, saith the apostle, *by the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*, Gal. ii. 20. Because he loved us, he was therefore pleased to give himself for us. Doth God chuse and elect any of us to serve him here, and to enjoy him hereafter? How well may this be termed the election of grace, as it is *Rom.* xi. 5. and ascribed wholly to his good-will and pleasure, *Eph.* i. 5. Doth God call us by the ministers of his word from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? Doth he invite us to partake of all the merits of Christ's death and passion? Doth he reveal his gospel to us, and call upon us to receive and embrace it? Blessed be his great name for it! He doth so: But wherefore doth he do it? Because we are better or more obedient than others unto him? No: But because he is more gracious and merciful to us than to others, 2 *Tim.* i. 9. Doth he wash us from our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness?

ousness? Doth he sanctify us throughout by his grace and Spirit, and make us holy as he is holy? Oh! Wherefore should the eternal God be thus favourable to such silly worms as we are, but merely for his free grace and mercy towards us? *Tit. iii. 5. 1 Pet. i. 3.* Doth God also upon our sincere repentance and faith in Christ, pardon our manifold and great transgressions? Doth he accept of our persons and performances, so that we are justified before him? How comes this about? Have we any thing in us that can commend us to so holy a God as he is? Or can we be acquitted from our sins, or justified before him, by virtue of any thing that our selves can do? No, alas! We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God; we have all broken his laws, incurred his displeasure, and so stand but as so many guilty, yea condemned malefactors before him. But how then is it possible for any of us to be justified or accepted of as righteous before him? The apostle resolves the question in few terms; *We are justify'd freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24.* It is by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; and yet it is freely too by the grace of God that any of us are justified. What shall I say more? Do we expect after all this to come to heaven? Shall any of us be ever so happy as to be admitted into God's presence, to behold his glory, and enjoy his divine perfections for evermore? Who are we poor sinful mortals, that we should ever expect such happiness as this is? Or what grounds can we have to hope for it? None surely, but the infinite grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord: As the apostle teacheth, saying, *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. 23.* If we speak of our desert, that is death; death is the only wages we have all deserved. And if we speak of eternal life, that we must acknowledge to be the free gift of God in Jesus Christ.

Thus we see how it is the grace of God alone that bringeth salvation to mankind. It was of his infinite grace that he was pleased to send his Son to die for us, it is by this that Christ gave his life a ransom for many, it is by this that we are both called and chosen, it is by this that our persons are justified, it is by this that our natures are sanctified, and it is by this that our souls are saved; so that the whole matter of man's salvation, from the beginning to the end, must be ultimately resolved into God's infinite grace to mankind, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Which grace of his is here asserted to have appeared to all men, *ἐπεφάνη πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις*, it hath shined forth to all men; implying, that before men sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, looking for no such thing as salvation, but rather despairing of it; when upon a sudden, as the word properly signifies, there sprang forth an unexpected light into the world, God's infinite love to mankind being made clear and manifest to all men. Before this time, God made known his grace and favour only to his peculiar people, the *Jews*, suffering all other nations to walk in their own ways, *Acts xiv. 16.* But now the former shades of darkness and error being dispersed, the Son of righteousness arose with healing in his wings upon all the corners of the world, darting forth his beams of light and grace to all men, that is, to men of all nations, ages, tongues, estates and conditions in the world: so that now there is no difference betwixt *Jew* and *Gentile*, *Greek* and *Barbarian*, *bond* or *free*, all have the grace of God equally dispensed unto them; they are all one in Jesus Christ, *Gal. iii. 28. Col. iii. 11.* So that now the meanest, as well as the highest persons in the world may have their share in the grace of God, servants as well as masters: which is principally intended here, as *Theophylact* observes, from the connexion of these words with the foregoing verses concerning servants, *ver. 9, 10.* which must needs be an extraordinary both excitement and encouragement to our laying hold upon the grace of God, considering that it is so large and boundless, that the poorest as well as the richest person amongst us may be partaker of it; for it hath appeared to all men, and particularly to you and me who are here assembled. From whence we may infer two things which highly concern us all.

1. That we ought to be truly thankful for this extraordinary expression of God's love to mankind, as also for the revelation of it unto us, that we the most unworthy of all his creatures should be so fully acquainted with it as we either are or may be, *Mat. xi. 25.*

2. Hence we may infer likewise what a necessity lies upon us to be serious and constant in our prosecution of eternal happiness, seeing the way to it is made so plain before us. If we had never heard of God's grace and readiness to accept us in Jesus Christ, our sin and folly would not have been so great, *Mat. xi. 21, 23.*

But now, that *The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men*, and to us in an especial manner, as clearly as to any in the whole world, *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?*

THUS we have seen now what we are here to understand, by *the grace of God*; in what sense this *grace* is said to *bring salvation*, and how it *hath appeared to all men*. But as there were some in the apostles time, which turned *the grace of God into lasciviousness*, Jude 4. so I fear, there may be too many amongst our selves, who hearing of *the grace of God bringing salvation to mankind*, think themselves secure and safe, so that they need not trouble themselves about their eternal happiness; for the *grace of God*, they fancy, will do all things for them, and leave nothing for themselves to do. They cannot but confess that they have sinned, and still continue in sin too; but seeing it is not themselves, but God's *grace that bringeth salvation to them*, they hope that by that their sins will be all pardoned, whether they repent seriously of them or no. But this is a dangerous mistake; a mere trap or engine of the devil to catch and destroy souls. It is true, it is only by *the grace of God* that our sins are pardoned, our persons justified, or our souls saved: but we must not think that our sins are pardoned, unless our lusts be also subdued; nor our persons justified, unless our natures be also sanctified; nor our souls saved, unless they be also cleansed by *the grace of God*; which so remits our former sins, that it turns us also for the future from them. This is the great doctrine which the apostle preacheth in these words; assuring us, that *the same grace of God which bringeth salvation to us*, teacheth us likewise *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*; or rather, *it bringeth salvation*, by teaching of us to do so.

BUT this being the great lesson which we must all learn if we desire to partake of the privileges of the gospel, and without which we shall have no part or portion in what Christ hath done and suffered for mankind; that you may not be deceived in your hopes of eternal salvation, I shall endeavour to explain it more particularly unto you. And for that end shall first shew, that *the grace of God* manifested to mankind in the gospel of Jesus Christ, doth indeed teach us all *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, even all manner of sin and corruption whatsoever; which is so clearly asserted in the word of God, that I should think it superfluous to prove it, but that the lives and actions of those who are called Christians, and pretend to believe in Jesus Christ, so palpably contradict it. For I verily think that there is no one thing in all the scriptures wherein the holy Ghost hath been pleased to express himself more fully and clearly to our weak apprehensions than this; telling us in plain terms, that the highest expression of God's love to mankind, even the sending of his Son into the world, was to bless us, *by turning every one of us from his iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. Yea, that he was therefore called Jesus, that is a Saviour, because he was to *save his people from their sins*, Mat. i. 28. And Christ himself, so soon as he had taken upon him the office of mediatorship for us, the first thing that he preached and taught mankind was, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Mat. iv. 17. Or, as St. Mark words it, *Repent, and believe the Gospel*, Mark i. 15. And elsewhere he tells us with his own mouth, *That he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, Mat. ix. 13. Hence the apostle gathers, that when Christ came into the world, *God commanded all men every where to repent*, Acts xvii. 30. And that he was exalted *to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins*, Acts v. 31. First repentance, and then remission of sins. In all which places, by repentance we are to understand not only contrition for, but conversion from our sins; and by consequence, obedience to all the precepts of the moral law. For that this is required of all such who expect salvation by Jesus Christ, is expressly asserted by the holy Ghost, saying, *That Christ being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him*, Heb. v. 9. that is, unto all, and to them only, which obey whatsoever he hath commanded: All which may be reduced to the two heads before spoken of; *Repent, and believe the gospel*. These are the two great things which we are all obliged to perform, in order to our being saved by Jesus Christ; even sincerely to repent of our sins, turn to God, or perform whatsoever he in his law hath been pleased to enjoin us, and then to believe or trust in him, both for the pardon of our defects, and for the acceptance of our sincere, tho weak performances.

BUT I needed not to have gone so far to have proved this. For it is not only expressly asserted in my text, but likewise in the words immediately following: *Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ,*

Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, ver. 13, 14. Where we have the two great ends of Christ's death both described together: For he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity; that is, from the guilt and deserved punishment of our sins; and then, that he might purify to himself a peculiar people; that is, that he might cleanse us from our sins, and make us an holy and peculiar people to himself, and zealous for, and wholly devoted to the doing of good works, both of piety towards God, and likewise of justice and charity to our neighbour.

I SHOULD not have insisted so long upon a plain truth as this is, but only for two sorts of persons amongst us of quite different opinions: The first are such as are altogether for such a notional and speculative faith in Christ, which relies upon his merits without observing his commands; of which I fear there are too many amongst us. The other are such as oppose, or at least neglect the preaching up the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ, or the grace and love of God to mankind in him, as if it opened a gap to all manner of licentiousness and debauchery: Which is the greatest mistake imaginable; for nothing in the world can more excite and encourage us to forsake our sins, and obey the commands of God, than to consider that if we do so, our sins shall be all pardoned, and the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, so that we shall be sure to be happy. Whereas to speak of our obedience to the moral law without any respect to the merits of Jesus Christ, as the way to happiness, is the greatest disheartning and discouragement in the world to any man, so much as to endeavour to obey. For no man that seriously weighs and considers things as he ought, can be so ignorant or insensible of his own infirmities as not to know, and be conscious to himself, that he comes infinitely short of every thing which God commands; so that should he have nothing else but his own obedience to trust to, what a sad and dismal condition would such a man be in? How careless would he soon grow of himself? How negligent of his own actions, when he is once persuaded that he can never be saved but by his own obedience to the moral law, and yet is conscious to himself that he can never perform such obedience as the moral law requires? For, why should such a man concern himself about obedience, when he knows that no obedience that he can attain to will ever stand him in any stead, because he cannot but find it to be imperfect, and to come short of what the law requires? What others think I know not, but for my own part should I think that I could never be saved but by my obedience to the moral law, I should never much matter whether I obeyed it or no, because I am conscious to my self that I can never obey it as I ought to do. But when I consider that if I obey it as well as I can, and trust to the merits of Jesus Christ for the pardoning of my infirmity, and supplying the many defects of my own obedience, that then my sins shall indeed be pardoned, and my self and actions accepted in and through him; this puts me upon the highest endeavours to do all I can to walk in all the commandments of God blameless, because I believe that my sincere endeavours for Christ Jesus's sake, shall be accepted of instead of absolute and legal perfection. And therefore it is a fond and ridiculous thing to say, that the preaching up the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ encourageth wickedness and vice; for it is certainly the greatest encouragement to grace and virtue that can possibly be set before us: For, as the apostle saith, *Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid*, Rom. vi. 1, 2. So say I, Shall we so believe in Jesus Christ, and God's grace in him, as to continue in sin? God forbid. No, we are so far from that, that the more God's grace in Jesus Christ is manifested unto us, the more we are both obliged and encouraged to honour and obey him, still remembering the apostle's rule here, that *the same grace which bringeth salvation, teacheth us likewise to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, &c. Nothing therefore being more sure and certain from the whole tenor of the gospel, than that the grace of God offer'd and reveal'd in it, doth teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; we are now to consider more particularly what it is properly to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and then what is that ungodliness and those worldly lusts which it teacheth us to deny.

As for the first, What it is properly to deny ungodliness. It is much the same with that expression in the sacrament of baptism, where the party baptized, promiseth *to renounce the devil and all his works*; for this is that which the grace of God teacheth us all to do, even to renounce our former sinful ways and practices, and to deny our selves for the future the pleasure we used to take in them. So that

this denying ungodliness, as St. *Chrysostom* observes, denotes πολλὴν τὴν διάστασιν πολλὴν τὸ μίσος, πολλὴν τὴν ἀναστροφὴν, a great distance off of it, a great hatred against it, and a great aversion from it. And so it doth not consist only in mourning for, but in turning from all manner of sin, and that too not only in our lives, but our hearts and affections also; so as to dry up the fountain as well as disperse the streams, and kill the root as well as lop off the branches of sin within us: that is, in plain terms, the grace of God teacheth you not only to forsake the outward acts, but likewise all love to, desire of, and delight in all ungodliness and worldly lusts whatsoever. Which is the next thing to be considered, even what we are here to understand by ungodliness and worldly lusts, which the grace of God teacheth us to deny.

First, By ungodliness we are here to understand whatsoever is contrary to God's word or worship; against his word, as all manner of heresies, and damnable errors, as the apostle calls them, 2 *Pet.* ii. 1. So St. *Chrysostom* expounds the words ἀσέβεια τὰ δόγματα φνέ, he calls erroneous opinions ungodliness, as being contrary to God's revealed will and word. But by ungodliness here we are principally to understand what is against or contrary to the worship of God, which indeed is the proper notion of the word ἀσέβεια, which according to its notation and etymology, signifies the non-performance of divine worship, or at least some defect in it; and by consequence, whatsoever sin is committed immediately against God himself, which we therefore call ungodliness, because it maketh a man ungodly, that is, unlike to God, of a different nature and disposition from him.

BUT would you have me come more home and close unto you? Would you know more particularly what acts of ungodliness the gospel teacheth you to deny? Take it in few terms: *The grace of God which bringeth salvation*, being made manifest unto you in the gospel of Jesus Christ; it teacheth, admonisheth, adviseth, obliges and enjoins you all, as you tender your eternal salvation, to renounce, deny and forsake whatsoever you know to be offensive to God's person, contrary to his nature, injurious to his name, or unbecoming his honour and majesty in the world. As for example; it teacheth you to renounce and strive against your former ignorance and senselessness of God; and that you labour to get your hearts possessed with a due sense, with clear and awful apprehensions of him. It teacheth you to deny all hardness of heart, and impenitence for sins past, and to dread the thoughts of ever displeasing God any more, as heretofore you have done. It teacheth you to deny all atheistical and unbelieving thoughts of God, and to banish them out of your minds, so as never to doubt of the certainty of his existence, the truth of his word, the equity of his precepts, nor of the faithfulness of his promises, which he hath made and confirmed to mankind in the blood of his only Son. It teacheth you to deny divine worship and honour to all persons and things in the whole world, except to the true and living God; that you do not pray to any creature, nor fall down before, or worship any image or idol whatsoever in a religious manner, but to follow the apostle's direction, even to *flee from idolatry*, 1 *Cor.* x. 14. It teacheth you to deny not only perjury, and forswearing your selves, but likewise the taking of God's name in vain, or to no purpose, so as to fear an oath, and dread the profaning so sacred and glorious a name with your polluted lips. It teacheth you to lay aside all secular and worldly business upon the Lord's day, not to profane the sabbath, but to devote it wholly to the service and worship of almighty God. It teacheth you to avoid all irreverence and unseemly deportment of your selves in the presence of God: That all the while you are before him, praying unto him, singing forth his praises, or hearing his holy word, you carry your selves so as becometh those who believe themselves to be in the presence of the supreme Being and Governor of the world, performing their homage and devotions to him. It teacheth you not to contemn, slight, or profane the ordinances and word of God; not to absent your selves from his publick worship, nor neglect his holy sacrament; not to despise his ministers, nor abuse or arrest his scriptures to your own destruction. It teacheth you to deny hypocrisy and dissembling with God, the searcher of your hearts; not to think to cheat God, and put him off with a specious shew and plausible pretence of piety, without the power and substance of it. It teacheth you not to presume upon his mercy, nor yet to mistrust his promises; not to neglect your duty unto him, nor to despair of his goodness and mercy unto you. In a word; *The grace of God made known unto you*, teacheth you to abstain from whatsoever is offensive or dishonourable unto God, and to perform whatsoever you think to be pleasing and acceptable unto him, and all because it *teacheth you to deny ungodliness*.

AND *worldly lusts*; that is the next thing which the grace of God teacheth you to deny: Where, by *worldly lusts*, we are to understand all inordinate desires of the things of this world, which the apostle reduces to those three heads, *The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life*, 1 John ii. 16. under which all the *κοινωνία ἐπιθυμίας*, the *worldly lusts* here spoken of are comprehended; which being premised in general, it is easy to determine what kind of worldly lusts the grace of God teacheth you to deny. It teacheth you to deny your selves all sensual and carnal pleasures arising from lust or luxury, from drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like; and still to keep your selves within the bounds of modesty, temperance and sobriety, *abstaining from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*, 1 Pet. ii. 11. *Walking honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying*, Rom. xiii. 13. It teacheth you to deny and condemn the profits and advantages of this life, as things not worthy to be compared with the glory you expect hereafter. It teacheth you to use no unlawful means to get, to keep, or to encrease your estates; not to go beyond, over-reach or defraud one another in any matter, 1 Thess. iv. 6. It teacheth you to abstain from oppression, extortion, rapine, couzenage, and from the very appearance of evil. It teacheth you to suppress all inordinate desire of riches, which the scriptures call covetousness; and not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world, but always to have your conversation in heaven. It teacheth you *not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God; to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. It teacheth you not to have high thoughts or proud conceits of your selves, but to be still humble and lowly in your own eyes, *esteeming others better than your selves*, Phil. ii. 3. It teacheth you to be loyal to your sovereign, obedient to your magistrates, faithful to your trust, constant to your friends, loving to your enemies, diligent in your calling, content with your condition, helpful to your neighbours, charitable to the poor, just and righteous, kind and civil unto all. In a word; *The grace of God that bringeth salvation to you*, teacheth you to be eminent in grace and virtue, and in all manner of good works whatsoever, *that your light may so shine, that others may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Mat. v. 16. and that you be *steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

THUS you see in part what that lesson is which the grace of God teacheth all such as are called to it, even to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. And now I have done my duty in expounding this gospel-lecture to you, it is both your duty and interest to learn and practise it; but that is a thing, I fear, there are but few that ever mind or think of: you can make a shift to come and hear a sermon, but it ordinarily proves but as the seed which was sown among the thorns; for the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches soon choak the word, so that it becomes unfruitful, Mat. xiii. 22. I have now shewn you what the gospel, which you all profess, requires from you; but what will it avail you to hear these things without the doing of them? Alas, it will be so far from furthering your eternal happiness, that it will but sink you lower into sin and misery: For he that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; they are your Lord and Saviour's own words, Luke xii. 47. The consideration whereof makes me sometimes tremble at the thoughts of the approaching day; when my preaching the gospel to you will be found, I fear, to be the occasion of greater damnation to many of you: But we must do our duty and leave the issue unto God, in whose name therefore, I advise and beseech you all to consider seriously with your selves, what you have heard at this time, even what that is which the grace of God, upon which your salvation depends, teaches and commands from you, nothing less than to deny all manner of ungodliness and worldly lusts. And do not content your selves with the bare hearing of these things, but set your selves immediately, and in good earnest, upon the practice of them. You know every one the plague of his own heart, and the sins which do so easily beset you: Have a care for the future of them, and make it your business to mortify and suppress them: Study and practise this heavenly and divine art of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; that art which the grace of God teacheth all those who would be partakers of it, whereby they may work out their salvation with fear and trembling;

Which God of his infinite mercy grant we may all do, &c.

S E R M O N XCI.

Holiness the great Design of the Gospel-Dispensation.

TITUS ii. 11, 12.

*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men ;
Teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we
should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.*

THUS we have seen what it is which the grace of God teacheth us to deny ; we are now to consider what it would have us do : For we must not think that the gospel teacheth only a negative religion, consisting only in denying or abstaining from ungodliness and worldly lusts ; but it requires likewise positive obedience to all the moral law. As we desire and expect, not only to escape hell, but to get to heaven ; not only to be freed from misery, but to be made happy : so the grace of God in order thereunto, teacheth us not only to depart from evil, but to do good ; not only to forsake our sins, but to turn to God ; not only to cease from doing what God hath forbidden, but to do likewise what he hath commanded ; or as is here expressed, not only *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, but *to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*. Under which three heads, *the whole duty of man* is briefly, but fully comprehended : For sobriety contains under it all such duties as respect our selves ; righteousness those which we owe our neighbour ; and godliness such as are due to God : And so amongst them they make up the whole chain of universal and evangelical obedience. Neither can they ever go alone, or be separated from one another : For sobriety without righteousness is but self-seeking ; righteousness without godliness is but men-pleasing ; and godliness without either of them is downright hypocrisy and deceit. So that he that is not godly, cannot be properly said to be either sober, or righteous ; and he that is not both sober and righteous, cannot be said to be godly. And therefore he that would attain to any of these virtues, must labour after all. He must first begin with sobriety in himself, to keep his mind in an even frame and temper ; then he must proceed to righteousness to his neighbour, to render unto all men their just due and rights ; and then he must advance so far as to piety towards God, to obey, worship, and honour him. This is the method which the grace of God it self directs us to walk by : First, to live soberly, and then righteously, and then godly in this present world. Not as if, in order of nature, godliness was not before both sobriety and righteousness ; but because in order of time, a man must first begin with himself, and then go on to perform such plain and easy offices as are due unto his neighbour ; and then at last come up to the highest duties of all, even such as he oweth immediately unto God himself : Which no man can rationally expect ever to arrive at, that doth not observe this method. For how can that man be righteous to his neighbour, who is not so just to himself, as to keep himself sober ? And how can he love God whom

whom he hath not seen, who doth not love his brother, whom he hath seen? No; ~~there~~ neither is nor can be any true religion or piety towards God, where there is not likewise sobriety and justice towards men. Neither can that man be just to another that is not sober in himself. Hence it is, that the grace of God, which brings salvation, prescribes this method in order to our attaining of it; even that we live first soberly, then righteously, and then godly in this present world. And that you may all understand the full and true meaning of every duty here express'd, I shall endeavour to explain them in order as they lie. Only give me leave to premise before-hand one general observation concerning all of them, which is this, that the grace of God doth not here teach us to be sober, righteous and godly only now and then; but that we live soberly, righteously and godly all the while that we are in this present world: So that our whole lives must be adorned with these resplendent graces, and gospel virtues. There is not the most debauched person in the world but may be sometimes sober; not the most unrighteous man upon earth but he may perform some acts of justice: Neither is there any man so wicked but he may sometimes seem to be godly. But this will not do our work: we must exercise our selves continually in these things, so as always, unto the utmost of our power, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Which being premised in general, we must now come to the particular explication of each duty.

First THEREFORE, the grace of God teacheth us to live soberly. The word here used is σωφρόνως, which some translate wisely, some temperately, others soberly, but they will amount to one and the same thing: for as to its notation, the adjective σύνφρων, is derived, ἀπὸ τῆς σώζειν τὴν φρένα, from preserving or keeping the mind: and so the virtue, σωφροσύνη, sobriety, is so called, because σώζει τὴν φρένα, it keeps the mind in its right frame and temper, and that is the proper notion of sobriety: For a man can then only be said to be sober, when his mind is serene, clear, and free from all disturbance and intoxication. And therefore when the grace of God teacheth us to live soberly, it thereby enjoins us to avoid whatsoever may any way disturb, or discompose our senses, reason, mind or judgment, so as always to keep our selves in an equal frame and disposition of spirit. And for that end it teacheth us to avoid,

1. ALL excess in meats and drinks: For gluttony and drunkenness do strangely affect the brain, distract the intellectuals, disorder the whole soul, so as to make it altogether unfit for any business either of our general or particular calling; and whenever a man is so, he may be truly said to be drunk, even when by reason of excessive drinking, he is indisposed for any religious or civil duties, or at least, cannot set upon them, nor carry them on so well as he could before. This is the most certain and proper notion of drunkenness; and this is the reason why the scripture all along condemns it for so heinous and great a sin, so odious and detestable both to God and man, because it unfits a man for the performance of those duties which he owes to both, depriving him for the present of that little reason which before he had, and so making him incapable of following any employment, or doing any work as he ought to do it, being indeed for the present more like a beast than man. And hence it is that the apostle here places sobriety in the fore-front, because unless a man be first sober in himself, he is not in a capacity of performing any acts of justice to his neighbour, or of piety towards God: And therefore he that would discharge his duty unto either, must be sure in the first place to avoid this first sort of drunkenness which is contrary to sobriety, and to follow the apostle's rule, *not to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess*, Eph. v. 18.

2. HE that would live soberly must be sure to avoid all inordinate desire of, and love to the things of this world, which have a strange kind of inebriating quality in them, making men exactly like the brutes that perish, always looking downwards upon earth, and minding nothing but mire and dirt. This our Saviour himself forewarneth us of, saying, *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares*, Luke xxi. 34. Where we may observe, he joins surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life together, as things equally overcharging the hearts of men, and making them so careless and negligent of their own good, that the day of judgment will take them unawares; so that overcaring for the world, that sin which we call covetousness, is but a sober kind of drunkenness, wherewith a man may be egregiously overtaken, or drunken, and yet be accounted sober, which is in a manner altogether as bad as being drunk with

wine, and in some sense worse: For this kind of drunkenness usually continues far longer than the other, men being ordinarily intoxicated with the cares of this world all their life long, so as to be never sober, never moderate in the prosecution of their worldly designs, but are in a continual hurry and distraction, always unfit to look after heaven, because always poring upon earth, and doating upon the transient vanities here below. And therefore in order to our living soberly, it is necessary that our desires of this world be moderated and regulated by the rules of scripture, and the dictates of right reason; that we never go higher than *Agur's* wish, *Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me*, Prov. xxx. 8.

3. In order to our living soberly, we must take care likewise to keep all our passions within their proper bounds and limits, and not suffer them to be unruly or exorbitant: For excessive love or hatred, joy or grief, or any other passion whatsoever, if it be once excessive, will as certainly disturb our reason and prevent our judgment as excessive drinking can ever do: As *St. Hierom* long ago observed, saying, That drunkenness doth not only consist in drinking wine, but it shews forth it self in other things, for, saith he, among other things, *amore & odio mens inebriatur, & fluctuat; & statum suum tenere non potest*, By love and hatred the mind is intoxicated, and reels to and fro, and cannot keep its proper station. The same may be said of joy and grief, but especially of anger, which is indeed one of the worst sorts of intoxication, a kind of short frenzy or madness, whereby the senses of men are so much oppressed, and their rational faculty so vehemently disturbed, that their very countenances are changed, their eyes distorted, their whole bodies often discomposed, their souls be sure are always disabled from exercising any act of reason, much more of grace or virtue as they ought to do. Hence the apostle tells us, *That the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, James i. 20. That is, no man can perform any act of righteousness so long as wrath and anger is boiling in him; for the man is not himself at present; he cannot govern his tongue nor any member of his body, much less can he exercise his reason so far as to perform acceptable obedience unto God, which requireth the greatest composure and settledness of mind that we can be possibly in. And therefore, so long as a man is in this condition, subject to the unweildy power and tyranny of his headstrong passions, he can by no means be termed a sober man, being drunk with passion, and so doth not reach so far as the first duty which *the grace of God* here teacheth, even to live soberly.

4. THE sobriety here spoken of, as it regulates our passions, so it moderates also our thoughts especially of our selves. It doth not suffer a man to be drunk or befuddled with self-admiration and esteem as many are, who have such high and overweening conceits of their own parts and gifts, and other seeming excellencies, that like men in drink, they fancy themselves great, and good, and wise, far beyond any of their neighbours; which plainly argues that they have a kind of delirium in their brains, their reason being disturbed, and their fancy distracted with self-conceit, wherewith many are so strangely overcome, that they are not able to contain it, but vent it at their mouths by self-applause. But these are far from true sobriety, which always composeth and moderateth a man's thoughts, so that he looks upon himself as he is, even as a poor and worthless creature, as the greatest of all sinners, as *St. Paul* did, 1 *Tim.* i. 15. and therefore is still mean and vile in his own eyes, thinking every man better than himself. This is the lesson which *the grace of God* here teacheth, and which *St. Paul* taught by it, saying, *For I say, through the grace of God given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith*, Rom. xii. 3.

5. GIVE me leave to mention one more act of sobriety which is too rare amongst us, and seldom thought of, and that is sobriety in matters of religion. For there is a new kind of riot and drunkenness which hath intoxicated the age we live in: men being now grown so unstable and giddy in religion it self that they reel to and fro, and stagger from one opinion to another, not able to walk steadily in the narrow path that leads to heaven. If we preach sound and wholesome doctrine to them, that these brain-sick persons cannot down with, they are for new words and phrases, new notions and speculations in divinity, by which means they soon turn scepticks in divine religion; which is the ready way to degenerate into downright atheists, and so to have no religion at all. This therefore *the grace of God* here warns us to have a care of, enjoining us to live soberly, to bridle and restrain

this looseness, extravagancy and distraction of the mind about opinions in religion; and to be grave, staid and sober in matters of such eternal concern as they are. As when *Festus* said to the great apostle of the *Gentiles*, Paul, *thou art beside thy self; much learning hath made thee mad*; St. Paul reply'd with a great deal of gravity and moderation, *I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness*, Acts xxvi. 24, 25. so should it be with us: We ought not to be either sceptical or fanatical in religion; but should always speak and love to hear *the words of truth and soberness*, not tossed too and fro with every wind of doctrine, but firm, steadfast and unmoveable in the main articles of our christian faith. This is to live soberly indeed, in the business of the greatest importance that our sobriety can ever manifest it self in.

Thus you see what it is which *the grace of God* would have you do by teaching you to live soberly. It teacheth you to be temperate in the use of all creature-comforts, so as to avoid the very appearance of gluttony and drunkenness. It teacheth you to moderate your desires of, and love to the things of this life. It teacheth you to keep your passions and affections all within their proper bounds and limits. It teacheth you to bring down all high and proud conceits of your selves, and to think soberly and lowly of your selves as you ought to think. It teacheth you to be well-grounded, grave and sober in matters of religion, not to swallow down every new doctrine, opinion and error that is broach'd among us, wherewith so many have been infatuated and made drunk. And verily, altho this living soberly be but the first part of the lesson which the *grace of God* teacheth its disciples, yet he that hath learnt this aright will find the other to be facile and easy. For when a man hath once got the mastery over himself, so as to keep himself always in this even and sober frame, he will be rightly qualify'd and fitted for the performance of all just and righteous acts, which *the grace of God* teacheth us in the next place to observe, even to live righteously as well as soberly.

Now as sobriety teacheth a man how to conform and behave himself within and to himself; righteousness, that shews him how to carry himself to others, especially his fellow-creatures; how to live and converse with them. And so it is indeed the bond and support of all human society; so that as without sobriety a man is a brute himself; so without righteousness, men would be as brutes to one another, devouring and being devoured of each other. For the prevention of which, *the grace of God* hath taught us how to deport and carry our selves to one another. And all the rules which the gospel lays down for this end, may be reduced to these three general heads, under which, all righteousness, strictly so called, as it respects men in any capacity whatsoever, are briefly, but fully comprehended.

1. *THE* grace of God, revealed in the gospel, teacheth every man to love his neighbour as himself, Mat. xxii. 39. Yea, *that we love one another as Christ hath loved us*, John xv. 12. From whence it is easy to observe, that you are all obliged by the gospel of Christ, and by *the grace of God* appearing in it, to have a real affection for, and to shew all expressions of love unto each other, both in word and deed, unto the utmost of your power, as Christ hath done to you: And by consequence, that you forgive all wrongs and injuries which you have or fancy your selves to have received from one another: That you retain no hatred, malice or thoughts of revenge against each other: That you study one another's good as you do your own; and endeavour to advance each other's both present and future welfare: That you sympathize with one another in the various changes of this transient life, *rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep*: That you use all means to draw one another from wickedness and vice, and to entice and persuade each other into the practice of grace and virtue: That you pray and intercede for one another at the throne of grace, and be really thankful for mercies conferr'd on others, as well as for those you receive your selves: That you be ready to distribute, willing to communicate to others necessities, supplying their wants of your abundance: That you *consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works*, Heb. x. 24. That you do not entertain any evil opinion of your neighbours without a cause, but still account all others as better than your selves: That you do not backbite or defame each other, but rather labour to keep up each other's good name and credit in the world: That you be faithful to any trust that others shall repose in you, and reveal no secrets that they commit unto you: That you prevent as much as in you lies, any evil or

mischief that you know to be falling upon others, and be as helpful and assistant as you can in procuring or advancing of their good. In a word, *The grace of God teacheth you that all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and that you be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*, Eph. iv. 31, 32.

2. *The grace of God teacheth you to render to all men their due; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*, Rom. xiii. 7. And so it teacheth, that you honour your superiors in order or degree, and obey the lawful commands of the magistrates which God hath set over you. That you submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the King as supreme, or unto governors as unto them which are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well, 1 Pet. ii. 15, 16. That ye have a due respect and honour for all that are in power and authority over you; yea, *that you honour and esteem all men*, ver. 17. That you do not cheat, couzen, over-reach or defraud one another in any matter, 1 Thess. iv. 6. That you use not oppression, extortion, rapine, or any other unlawful means whereby to encrease your own estate, to the diminution of another's. That you restore whatsoever you have unjustly, either by fraud or violence, taken from another. That you withhold not from the poor that just provision and maintenance which God hath put into your hands for them. That you neglect no opportunity of doing good to any man; but that as you have opportunity you do good to all men, especially to them *who are of the household of faith*, Gal. vi. 10. or in brief, that you *owe no man any thing, but to love one another*, Rom. xiii. 8.

Lastly, *THE grace of God teacheth you to live righteously*; it thereby enjoins you to model all your actions by that divine rule of our blessed Saviour, *That whatsoever you would that others should do to you, you do even so to them*, Mat. vii. 12. or, as we briefly phrase it, *That you always do as you would be done by*. That you do no more wrong to others, than you are willing to receive from them. That as you would have others do what good they can for you, so you do what good you can for others. That you injure no man in his soul, body, name or estate, any more than you could be content to be injured your selves. In a word, that you be as kind and courteous, as helpful and assistant, as true and trusty, as just and faithful unto all men, as you desire all men should be to you.

THESE are the general rules of righteousness and equity, which the gospel commands you to walk by. And as you cannot be thus righteous towards men, unless you be sober in your selves, so neither can you be pious towards God, unless you be thus righteous towards men; and therefore the gospel teaches us first to live soberly, then righteously, then godly. But it is not enough for us to live soberly and righteously, unless we live godly too; which is therefore placed last, because it is that which crowns the rest, and without which, neither our sobriety nor righteousness will stand us in any stead; and therefore it must needs very highly concern us to understand what it is which *the grace of God* would have us do, by teaching us to live godly. In searching into which, we had need be very cautious and circumspect; it being a thing which so many pretend to, and so few, so very few that ever arrive at it, and that not only amongst *Jews, Turks and Heathens*, but even amongst *Christians* themselves; people being generally mistaken about the notion of godliness in general. Go among the papists, and there you'll find them esteemed the most godly and pious persons, who say the most *Ave-Maria's*, and *Pater-Noster's*, that bow the most reverently to images, and worship the host, or consecrated wafer, with the greatest devotion; as if godliness consisted only in some few superstitious rites and ceremonies; or at the best, but in some few external acts and performances. Go among the enthusiasts, and there you'll find godliness placed in raptures and extasies, in new revelations, and in the frequent repetition of scripture phrases. Go among others, who boast themselves the godly party, and there you'll find godliness asserted to consist principally in long *extempore* prayers, in frequent hearing of sermons, and receiving the sacrament without kneeling. Nay, there are too many among us, who have not been ashamed to abuse the sacred name of godliness, to palliate the most atrocious crimes, the most barbarous enormities, the most hellish enterprizes, that ever the sons of men could be guilty of: No schism in the church, no sedition in the state, no rebellion it self being ever contrived or carried on but under the pre-

pretence of godliness: All which can certainly be ascribed to nothing else but to the gross ignorance that is in the world, concerning the true nature of godliness; which certainly is a thing of an higher nature, and more divine stamp than such deluded mortals would make it. And therefore, that you may not fall into the same error and danger, as others have done before you, fancying themselves to be godly when they are not, I shall endeavour as plainly as I can, to clear up your apprehensions concerning the nature of true godliness, that you may all understand what really it is to live godly in this present world.

For which end we must first know in general, that the word here translated godly, is *εὐσεβής*, and wheresoever in the new testament you read of godliness, in the original it is *εὐσεβεία*, or *θεοσεβεία*; which according to its notation or etymology, properly signifies true worship or the worshipping of God, or if you will, right worshipping of the true God. And therefore seeing it is by words that we come to the true notion of things, and the holy Ghost always uses this word to express that which we call godliness; hence it follows, that when we speak of godliness, we must not restrain to some few particular acts, but look upon it as comprehending the whole system of all those duties, which we as creatures owe to him that made us, and in the due performance whereof, our worship and adoration of him consisteth; so that he that worships God aright, may be justly termed a godly man, and no man else can be properly called by that name. And therefore if we would not be mistaken in a matter of such consequence as this is, in order to our finding out what real godliness is, we must search into the true nature of divine worship, and seriously consider with our selves, what it is in a scripture sense to worship God.

Now if we consult the scriptures to know wherein the worship of God doth principally consist, we may easily find that as God hath made both our souls and bodies, so he expects that we should worship him in both, according to their several capacities; and by consequence, that there are two sorts of acts wherein godliness in general consisteth: The one external, performed by the body together with the soul; the other internal, performed by the soul without the body.

For, *First*, nothing can be more plain and certain, than that God in scripture requires some kind of external or bodily worship from us, whereby to testify our acknowledgment of his sovereignty over us, as likewise of our dependence upon, and submission unto him; insomuch, that it is very observable, all the words that are ever used to express our worshipping of God, in the old testament, they properly and primarily signify our outward gesture and deportment before him. For there are but three words that the holy Ghost ever makes use of there to this purpose; and they are *כרע* and *תשחחוהו* whereof the one signifies the bending of our knees; the other the bowing of our heads with the upper part of our bodies, and the last the prostration of our selves upon the ground, with our hands spread out before him. And it would be very strange if God should use no other words to express his worship, than what denote the reverential postures of our bodies, and yet should require no bodily worship at all from us; which is such a blind and groundless conceit, that I may confidently assert, that whosoever entertains it, never understood the true meaning and purport of the second commandment, wherein God expressly enjoins us not to bow or fall down before any image or idol; which certainly he would never have done, had not that been an essential part of his own worship. And if it be no part of divine worship to kneel, bow or fall down before God, neither can any man be said to worship an idol, by kneeling, bowing or falling down before it; but seeing God hath expressly forbidden us to do so to an idol, he hath thereby as expressly enjoined us to worship him after that manner. And verily, had he never enjoined it to us, yet the very law of nature would teach us the same thing. For if we really fear and dread the presence but of an earthly prince, we cannot but express it some way or other before him. How much more shall we sanctify the Lord of hosts himself by our reverential deportment in his presence, if he be our only fear, and our only dread as he ought to be? Insomuch, that for my own part, I think, that man must have a great deal more charity than now is usual in the world, that can think or believe that such persons truly fear God, who can sit as confidently before him, and speak as malapertly to him, as if he was their fellow-creature. If this be to worship God, I must confess my self altogether ignorant of what it is to worship him:

him. For if I know any thing of God, and of that service and honour which is due unto him, we that live and move, and have our being in him, ought to be possessed with such an awe and dread, such a fear and reverence of him, as not to dare to carry our selves irreverently or unseemly in his presence; especially while he is speaking unto us, or we to him. Yea, whatsoever duty we perform either to or for him, if we would have it to be acceptable to him, we must perform it *with reverence and godly fear*, Heb. xii. 28. And the reason which the apostle there gives, is, because *our God is a consuming fire*, ver. 29. And verily, he that rightly knows, seriously considers, and clearly apprehends that, even that *God is a consuming fire*, that he is a great and glorious, an infinitely powerful, almighty, and terrible Being, such a one cannot but express his fear and reverence of him in all his approaches to him; he cannot be like the proud *Pharisee*, who had the impudence to talk as malapertly with God as if he had been his fellow, and to say, *God I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, nor even as this publican*, Luke xviii. 11. Where he had the confidence to tell God a lye to his face, in saying that himself was not so unjust as the *Publican*, that stood by, when Christ himself faith afterwards, that the *Publican* went home justified rather than he: And why did he so, but by reason of his reverence and humble deportment before God? For he stood *afar off*, and would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, ver. 13. so that he testified his inward fear and dread of God, by his outward carriage and behaviour before him. And if any of you desire to manifest your selves to be truly godly indeed, you must be sure to lay aside all carelessness and indifferency, much more, all irreverence and rudeness in the presence and worship of God; and to perform all your devotions to him with all the modesty and humility, with all the reverence and solemnity that possibly you can, as becometh those who believe themselves to be engaged in the highest acts that they are or can be capable of performing.

How you ought to express your inward fear of God by your outward deportment before him, I shall not undertake to determine, or rather I need not do it. For I dare confidently assert, that he that truly fears God, will be so far from thinking these solemn gestures prescribed by our church in divine worship to be either superfluous or superstitious, that he will rather conclude them to be essential parts of the worship of God, and that they naturally flow from, and necessarily follow upon the true fear and reverence of the eternal God wheresoever it is.

BUT tho, in order to our worshipping God aright, and by consequence to our being truly godly, it is necessary that we behave our selves thus solemnly and reverently in his presence and service, yet we must not think that this is all that is required of us; for indeed, it is nothing at all without those other sort of acts wherein, as I told you, godliness consisteth, even the internal acts of the soul, from whence these outward performances of the body do, or ought to flow. And what these are, we come now to consider. And I shall endeavour to explain them so clearly unto you, that none of you, but for the future may know what it really is to be godly.

First THEREFORE: To your being or living godly, it is indispensably required, that your minds be possessed with a due sense of God, with right, and if possible, clear conceptions of him, so as not only to be able to talk or discourse of God as he is the creator, the preserver, governor, possessor, and disposer of all things in the world; for that a wicked and ungodly man may do as well, and perhaps far better than he that is truly pious. For we may find by our own experience, that we may utter many things with our mouths which we do not rightly apprehend, nor have any true sense of them in our hearts. And therefore, altho it be necessary that we have such a knowledge of God as to be able to discourse of what he is, and hath done, and still doth in the world, yet the bare theory or speculation of such things cannot be reckon'd amongst the acts of true godliness; because not only ungodly men, but the devils themselves go so far, and yet remain ungodly and devils still. But that knowledge of God which is the first act of godliness, and that whereupon all the rest are grounded, altho it pre-supposeth right notions and conceptions of the divine perfections, yet it consisteth principally in a due sense of God upon the heart. What that is, I must confess my self unable to express, so as that any one should apprehend it but they that have it: But only in general we may call it an experimental knowledge, whereby a man hath the sense or experience of these perfections upon his own heart, which he knows and believes to be in God,

whereby his thoughts and conceptions are so strangely enlarged, that he seems to apprehend him that is altogether incomprehensible, so that he is no longer able to endure himself, but is forced to cry out with *Job*, in the same case, *by reason of God's highness I cannot endure*, Job xxx. 23. This is that knowledge of God, which the scripture so often enjoins, whereby a man sensibly apprehends, and contemplates the great God as the first of all Beings, the cause of all causes, the chiefest of all goods, the source of all happiness, and the center of all perfections; as one whose nature is so pure, whose glory is so transcendent, whose wisdom is so incomprehensible, whose power is so boundless, and all whose perfections are so high, so glorious, so infinite and eternal, that our highest apprehensions of him are still infinitely below him. And when once a man hath attained to such a sense of God as this is, all other acts of piety will be facile and easy to him: for indeed he cannot but exert them. For,

Secondly, ANOTHER act of godliness, and a great one too, is to love the Lord your God with all your souls. Mat. xxii. 37. that is, to chuse him as your chiefest good, and prefer him in your choicest affections before all things in the world besides; to look upon riches, pleasures, honours, health, strength, life, liberty, and all things else, as less than nothing, and vanity in comparison of so glorious and infinite a good as he is. But he that knows God, as I have shewn you ought to do, cannot chuse but love him before all things else; for he that apprehends God as his chiefest good, must love him too under the same notion. And therefore, so long as your affections are entangled among your creature-comforts, enjoyments and relations, so as to be fixed upon them more than upon God, you are far as yet from being godly, far from worshipping God as ye ought to do, because you give to the creature the highest honour and worship which is due to God, even your hearts, your love and affection. And by consequence, as you ever desire to learn and practise the lesson which the grace of God here teacheth, you must be sure to gather up all your scattered affections from all things upon earth, and raise and unite them upon him that made them, and who therefore made them that himself alone might have them.

Thirdly, THE sacred fire of divine love being thus enkindled in your breasts, it must break forth into ardent desires after him whom your souls love. You must not think that you love God before all things else, so long as you desire any thing else before him; until you can say with *David*, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? neither is there any thing that I desire upon earth in comparison of thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 25. And it being natural for us to labour for that which we desire, yea, so that our endeavours after it are always proportionable to our desires of it; hence, as we are to desire, so we are to seek God before all things else, and to make use of all means that lead to the enjoyment of him; so as always to follow our Saviour's rule, to *seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness* in the first place, Mat. vi. 33. And he that always doth so, may be properly said to live godly.

Fourthly, As our love is to be fixed upon, and our desires to be carried after, so is our joy to be placed in God alone, so as to make him the only object of all our happiness and felicity. We must not think to find any true joy or comfort there where God was never pleased to put it, even in any creature whatsoever: But we must always rejoice in God, and in him alone, both when we have and when we have not any thing else to rejoice in, still observing the apostle's command, *to rejoice in the Lord always*, Phil. iv. 4.

Fifthly, BUT we are so to rejoice in the Lord as to make him the only object of our fear too, fearing nothing in the world so much as his anger and displeasure against us. This is the way whereby himself hath commanded us to sanctify him the Lord of hosts, by making him our only fear and our only dread: *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself*, saith the prophet, *let him be your fear, let him be your dread*, Isa. viii. 13. And verily this is so great a part of godliness, that in the old testament it is frequently, yea constantly put for the whole, godliness there being generally termed the fear of God. And so in the language our Saviour spake, there is no other word for godliness but only *θεοσεβεια* the fear of God; so that no man can be said to be godly but he that fears God; and whosoever fears God may be justly said to be a godly man; yea he is therefore a godly man because he fears God; but he that fears God dares not but obey his commandments.

Sixthly, HENCE in the sixth place, in order to your being godly, it is necessary that you obey all the commands of God. I do not say it is necessary only to do what God

God commands, but you must therefore do it because God commands it, otherwise you cannot be said to obey him in the doing of it. And whatsoever you do in obedience unto God, you thereby make it an act of godliness or of piety towards God, altho the matter of the act be not referred immediately unto him, *ex. gr.* When you give an alms to the poor, if you do it out of pure obedience unto God, tho the alms you give, respect the poor, and so it is an act of justice or charity; yet your giving it after that manner makes it an act of piety towards God, and an high one too, in that your eye is fixed upon God's commands, at the same time that your hand is stretched out to relieve the poor. And by this means, not only our praying and hearing and the like, but every act of our life both may and ought to be an act of godliness; for all our actions are to be according to God's command, and we are to do them only upon that account, because they are so; and whatsoever we thus do in obedience to God, cannot but be a godly act.

Seventhly, But there is still another act of godliness behind, without which all the rest will cease to be so, and that is, believing and trusting in God, and in such promises as he hath made unto us in Jesus Christ: For that trusting in God is really a duty incumbent upon all, can be denied by none that believe the scriptures, wherein we are as expressly commanded to *trust in the Lord with all our hearts*, as to love him with all our hearts, *Prov. iii. 5.* But all the ground that we have to trust and depend upon God, is only because he hath made several promises of good things unto us, and sealed them also in the blood of his only son; and therefore he expects and commands that we take his word for what he hath said, and depend upon him for the fulfilling of it; as believing him to be both infinitely wise, faithful, and able to perform whatsoever he hath promised. And whosoever doth not thus believe in him, so as to trust and rely upon what he hath said, it is plain that he suspects either his faithfulness to his promise, or else his ability to perform it: which cannot but be acknowledged one of the greatest sins that we can possibly be guilty of. And so on the other side, our trusting in him is certainly one of the highest acts of godliness that we can possibly exert: yea, it is that which the scripture lays so much stress upon, that without it no other acts of godliness can be accepted of as such by God: For we cannot but be conscious to our selves that the best acts of piety that we can perform are very defective, and fraught with many sinful infirmities, and so in themselves are not really good and pious acts. But God in his gospel hath been pleased to promise us, that if we do but sincerely endeavour to perform them as well as we can, and trust in him and his promise for it, he will pardon our defects and accept of what we do for Christ Jesus sake: Which trusting in Jesus Christ, or the promises made in him, is that act of faith to which our justification or acceptance in the gospel is so frequently ascribed, and which in the old testament is called trusting in the Lord, in the new believing in Jesus Christ; upon which our eternal salvation is expressly said to depend; because nothing that we do can be accepted of without Jesus Christ, nor by him neither without trusting on those promises which are made and confirmed in him. And therefore, in order to our living so as we are here commanded, even a godly life, or such a life as may be accepted of as godly, it is absolutely necessary, that to the other acts of godliness before mentioned, we add this of trusting in God, which alone crowns all the rest, and renders them acceptable in Jesus Christ.

THUS now I have shewn you how you may and ought to lead, not only a sober and righteous, but also a godly life, as the grace of God here teacheth you to do; which you may do by keeping your hearts and minds continually possessed with a due sense and awful apprehensions of God, by loving him with all your hearts, by desiring him above all things else, by rejoicing in him as your chiefest good, by making him your only fear and your only dread, by obeying to the utmost of your power whatsoever he hath commanded you; and when you have done all, trusting only on the promises which he hath made in Christ, for your pardon and acceptance: These are the things which the grace of God requires of you in teaching you to live godly. And need I now use any more arguments to persuade you to the practice of what you have now heard? I hope I need not: For I know I speak to none but rational and understanding persons, who are all capable both of knowing and doing whatsoever I have been speaking of, yea, and who hope and expect too e'er long to go to heaven. But give me leave to ask you seriously, as in the presence of God, How do any of you think to get thither? Do you ever look to go to heaven any other way than that which God himself hath prescribed in his holy word? Is it

not

not by the grace of God in Jesus Christ that you expect your sins shall be pardoned, and your souls saved? But what! Doth not this very grace of God, from which you expect these glorious things, expressly teach you to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world? With what confidence then can you expect to receive the blessings which the grace of God hath promised to you, if you will not perform those duties which it requireth of you? No, do not deceive your selves, there is not one duty which the grace of God here enjoins you, and which I have endeavour'd this day to explain unto you, but you must do it, or never come to heaven. And therefore let me beg of you to dally no longer in a matter of such consequence, but devote your selves wholly to the practice of these duties, for nothing less than your eternal welfare depends upon it; for these are the gospel-terms upon which your salvation depends; and unless you come up to them, I dare assure you, that altho you be called, you will never be chosen. And therefore be advised to set upon these great duties before it be too late; otherwise, remember my words, you will one day wish you had, but then wishing will do no good.

S E R M O N XCII.

Holiness the great Design of the Gospel-Dispensation.

TITUS ii. 13.

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE apostle in the words immediately foregoing these, acquaints us with the great mystery of man's salvation by the *grace of God*, together with the doctrine which the same *grace* teacheth all those to whom it brings salvation. *The grace of God*, saith he, *which brings salvation hath appeared to all men*, ver. 11. That is, God's infinite love and mercy to mankind in sending his Son into the world to die for us, it is that which hath brought salvation to us, not so as to exclude either Christ's satisfaction for us, or our obedience unto God; but so that our salvation is still to be ultimately resolved into God's grace, and ascribed to his infinite mercy and compassion to fallen man, as it is revealed to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ; which hath now appeared to all men, putting them into a way how they may be recovered from the state of sin and misery, into a state of grace and eternal salvation, by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

THIS therefore is that saving grace of God whereby every soul here present may attain to everlasting bliss and happiness; but in order to your partaking of it, it is indispensably required, that you observe what *the grace of God teacheth*, as well as what it hath promised to you.

BUT what is it which *the grace of God* here teacheth you to do? Why it teacheth you, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, you should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. The meaning of which words in brief is, That that grace by which alone it is possible for you to be saved, teacheth you to deny, renounce, and forsake whatsoever is offensive unto God, or contrary to his law and nature; that you do not blaspheme his name, nor profane his sabbaths, nor despise his ordinances, nor abuse his mercies, nor slight his judgments, nor mistrust his promises, nor carry your selves irreverently in his presence. It teacheth you also to deny, avoid and hate all worldly lusts, whether the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life; to keep your selves within the bounds of modesty and temperance; neither ambitious of the honours, desirous of the pleasures, nor covetous of the riches of this transient world. It teacheth you to live soberly, that is, to avoid all excess in eating and drinking, so as never to over-charge your bodies, distemper your brains, nor discompose your selves for the works either of your general or particular calling; that you avoid all inordinate desires of, and love to the things of this life; that you keep your passions all within their proper limits, and never suffer them to be either unruly or exorbitant; that you have moderate and sober thoughts of your selves, so as never to be drunk or besotted with self-applause, or admiration: As also that you be well grounded, grave and sober in matters of religion, not reeling to and fro from one opinion to another; but remain firm and stedfast, especially to the fundamental articles of the christian faith. It teacheth you likewise to live righteously, that is, to love your neighbour as your selves, to render to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honour to whom honour; as also that you model all your civil actions by that golden rule prescribed by our blessed Saviour, *That whatsoever you would that others should do to you, do you even so to them.* It teacheth you, lastly, to live godly too; that is, that you sincerely perform all such duties as you owe immediately to God that made you; that you serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind, and worship him with reverence and godly fear; that you have a due sense and awful apprehensions of him, and love him with all your hearts and souls, with all your might and mind; that you desire his love and favour, and rejoice in his presence and service more than all things in the world besides; that you fear nothing so much as his displeasure, and therefore obey whatsoever he hath commanded; and when you have done all, to trust only in his promises which he hath made in Christ, for the pardon of your sins, and the acceptance of what you do. These, these are the great lessons which *the grace of God* that brings salvation teacheth, and requires you all to learn and practise.

Now the apostle having thus shewn what it is which *the grace of God* revealed in the gospel enjoins us, and knowing how backward we are to the performance of such duties as these are; he here in the next place presents us with the best means, the highest motives, and the strongest encouragement that he can, to set our selves in good earnest upon it; and that is to consider that transcendent glory and happiness which they shall hereafter have, who *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*: Looking, saith he, for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: That is in brief, expecting that blessedness which we hope for when the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ shall appear in glory.

THE words being thus brought in, it is easy to gather and observe several things from them: But I shall instance only in three things, wherein the scope and substance of the words is briefly contained, from those words. Therefore we may observe,

- I. THAT Jesus Christ our Saviour is the great God.
- II. THAT this great God shall one day appear in glory.
- III. THAT the blessed hope which we look for at the glorious appearance of Christ, should encourage and excite us to *live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*. Of these three things therefore I shall speak in the same order wherein I here propounded them, beginning with that which is placed last in my text; but must be first explained, because it makes way for the other two.

First THEREFORE; I observe from hence that our blessed Saviour is really and truly God, being here called the great God. For his appearance is here said to be the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Indeed, what-

forever is necessary to be known concerning our blessed Saviour is briefly couched under these words; both his natures, his office, and his unction, or ordination to that office being contained in them. His human nature is intimated in his name Jesus; for so he was named when he was born of the virgin *Mary*, called therefore Jesus of *Nazareth*; his divine nature is here asserted in his being called, The great God. His office is implied in his being our Saviour, The great God and our Saviour. Not only Saviour in general, but our Saviour in particular; that is, the Saviour of mankind. And then his unction or ordination to this office is plainly signified, by his name Christ, that is, anointed, and so ordained by God to be the Saviour of mankind. But not to insist upon the other; the principal thing I desire you here to observe, is the divinity of our blessed Saviour, plainly and expressly here asserted. For nothing can be more clear than that he is here called, The great God: The glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; where the great God cannot be understood of any other but of our Saviour Jesus Christ. And that for two reasons.

First, In the *Greek* text, one and the same article serves both these predicates, τὸ μέγαλόν θεὸς καὶ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν, not καὶ τὸ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν; which we therefore rightly translate of the great God, and our Saviour, not of the great God and of our Saviour; as if the great God, and our Saviour, were here two distinct persons: For the *Greek* idiom would not admit of such an interpretation; constantly requiring that where one only article is used in common to two predicates, they be both referred to the same subjects; and by consequence, that it is Jesus Christ alone who is here called both the great God, and our Saviour.

BUT that you may not think that the divinity of Christ can be proved from this place only, upon so nice a criticism as an article, I desire you to observe in the second place, that the glorious appearing here spoken of, is likewise an undeniable demonstration of it. For we never read in scripture of the glorious appearing of God the Father; but only of Jesus Christ, whose second coming in glory to judge the world, is called his glorious appearing; or, ἐπιφάνεια τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, the appearance of his glory. But here is express mention made of the glorious appearing of the great God; which therefore cannot be understood of any other, but of that great God who is likewise our Saviour Jesus Christ.

NOTHING therefore can be more plain, than that our blessed Saviour is here called the great God: Or as *St. Chrysostom* observes, εἰ πρὸς τὸ μέγαλον φησὶν, ἀλλ' ἀπολύτως μέγαλον, he doth not say relatively great, but absolutely great; none being greater than he. And therefore he cries out, πᾶς οἱ εἰσὶν τὸ πᾶρὸς ἐλάττωνα τὸ υἱὸν λέγοντες, where are they that say, The Son is less than the Father? seeing he is here absolutely called the great God. Hence *Athanasius* useth this place against the *Arians*, to prove, ὅτι μέγαλον θεὸς ἐκλήθη ὁ υἱός, that the Son is called the great God. And so do the other Fathers, both *Greek* and *Latin*, frequently produce these words to prove that the Son is not only God, but the same great and almighty God that the Father is.

AND verily was there no other place in all the scriptures whereupon to ground this the fundamental article of our christian faith; this to any sober and unprejudiced person would be sufficient. However to confirm you still more in this great truth, lest living in such a sceptical and wavering age as this is, you should be persuaded to doubt of it, I desire you to consider, that the same names, the same properties, the same works, and the same worship which is ascribed to the Father, is likewise frequently in holy scripture given to the Son: So that he that denies the Son to be God, may as well deny that we have any reason to believe the Father to be so. And therefore, if this be once proved, you will have as clear a demonstration of the divinity of Christ, as the nature of the thing is capable of. But now to prove this,

1. I say the names that are given to the Father, are ascribed also to the Son in the holy scriptures. For, *Is the Father called God? so is the Son*: For, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*, John i. 1. So also, *Acts* xx. 28. *Which he*, that is, *which God hath purchased with his own blood*, which cannot possibly be understood of any but God the Son. *Is the Father the true God? so is the Son*, 1 John v. 20. *Is the Father over all, God blessed for ever? so is the Son*, Rom. ix. 5. *Is the Father called the Lord? so is the Son*, John xx. 28. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. Isa. xl. 3. John i. 23.

2. THE same properties or perfections which are attributed to the Father, are attributed likewise to the Son. *Is the Father eternal? so is the Son*, Rev. i. 17, 18. *Is*

the Father omniscient? so is the Son; he knoweth all things, Joh. x. xi. 17. Is the Father omnipresent, or every where present? so is the Son. For, wheresoever, where but two or three, saith he, are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them, Matt. xviii. 20. which is impossible he should be, was not he present every where. Is the Father omnipotent, or the almighty God? so is the Son, Rev. i. 8.

3. THE same works also which the Father is said to do are ascribed likewise to the Son: Did the Father make all things? so did the Son. *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made, John i. 3. Col. i. 16. Doth the Father preserve and uphold all things? so doth the Son; he upholdeth all things by the word of his power, Heb. i. 3. And by him all things consist, Col. i. 17. Doth the Father forgive sins? that certainly none can do but God, and yet the Son doth so too, Mark ii. 5, 7.*

4. THE same honour and worship which is due to the Father, ought to be given to the Son too. Are we obliged to *believe in God the Father?* so are we bound to *believe in the Son too, John xiv. 1. Is the Father to be worshipped by all creatures?* so is the Son, *even by the angels themselves, Heb. i. 6. Inasmuch that our Saviour tells us, That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, John v. 23. And as we pray to the Father, so are we to pray to the Son too, Luke xvii. 3. Acts vii. 59.*

MANY other arguments might be produced for the confirmation of this great truth, even that our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ really is, as he is here called, the great God: For I think it is impossible that so high a truth as this is, should be expressed more clearly in the holy scriptures than this is expressed. Howsoever, the arguments already produced may suffice to confirm any impartial, unprejudiced, sober and considerate person in the truth, that Jesus Christ is really the same great and eternal God as the Father is, and by consequence, co-equal, co-essential and co-eternal with the Father: which being once acknowledged, it will easily be granted, that there is a trinity of persons in the divine nature; for no man ever denied the one, that believed the other. Neither indeed can any one in reason deny a trinity of persons in the Godhead, that acknowledgeth the Godhead of the Son: for the Father and the Son being both divine persons, the holy Ghost must needs be so too, he being still associated with them; as where St. Paul saith, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy Ghost be with you all, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. where we have all the three persons distinctly mentioned. As also in the institution of the sacrament of baptism, where our blessed Saviour expressly commands his apostles, saying, Go ye therefore and teach or disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost, Mat. xxviii. 19. Which words I cannot but wonder how any man can read, and yet deny or doubt of a trinity of divine persons; seeing the sacrament of baptism it self, whereby we are all initiated into the christian religion, by Christ's own institution, is to be administered in the name of three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the holy Ghost: For how can any man imagine that two other persons should be joined with the Father, in one of the highest acts of divine worship, even baptism it self, if they were not really and truly divine persons as well as he; or if they were not one and the same God with him himself? For altho there be a trinity of persons in the Godhead, yet we must still believe there is but one Godhead in that Trinity, according to St. John's words, *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one, 1 John v. 7. that is, tho they be three persons, they are still but one God; one in nature, one in power, one in wisdom, one in glory, one in all manner of perfections whatsoever; so that all three, and every one of the three, is that one glorious, eternal, supreme, and universal being, which we call God.**

So much may suffice for the first observation I presented you from these words, even that Jesus Christ our Saviour is the great God. The next thing to be considered is, that this great God will one day appear in glory: *Looking for that blessed hope, saith the apostle, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* For the opening of which, we must know there is a twofold appearing of Christ; the one is *ἐμφάνεισθαι τὸ χάριτος*, the appearing of his grace, spoken of *ver. 11.* the other is, *ἐμφάνεισθαι τὸ δόξης*, the appearing of his glory, mentioned here. His first coming was with great lowliness and humility, the second will be with great majesty and glory; concerning which his glorious appearing the angels certified the apostles, Acts i. 11. *In like manner, that is, as he was carried to heaven in a cloud,*

cloud, so shall he come down in a cloud again, and that with power and great glory; as himself tells us, *Matt. xxiv. 30.* The angels also, and the archangels shall attend upon him, and be both his heralds and trumpeters, *1 Thess. iv. 16.* At which time, to manifest his great power and glory to all the world, he will do these things, which we shall all be then eye-witnesses of, and not only we, but all, both angels and men.

1. He will by his almighty power raise the dead; so that whatsoever human bodies were ever endowed with a rational soul, how long soever they have been scattered into dust and atoms, shall then be reduced to their antient form again; every particle being fetched from the remote places, where they have been dispersed, and hastening into the same places where before they were, so as to compose the self-same individual bodies which before they did. This our Saviour himself hath told us of before-hand, assuring us *that all that are in their graves shall then hear his voice, John v. 28. John xi. 43.*

2. ALL mankind that ever did or shall live upon the face of the earth, and carried again into it, being then raised from their graves; they, together with such as shall be then alive, shall be gathered together before Christ, without any distinction of ages, sex, conditions, languages or estates; they shall all be equally summoned and stand upon the same ground before him, that shall then sit as judge both of quick and dead: For himself hath told us, *That when he, the Son of man, shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations, Matt. xxv. 31, 32.*

3. ALL nations being thus assembled before him, he shall review every man's actions that he ever did, together with the very thoughts that ever sprang up in his heart, and the words that ever proceeded out of his mouth: then shall your secret sins be laid open, and the very thoughts of your heart be made as manifest as the most notorious actions of your whole life; for nothing can be hid from that all-seeing judge that then will sit upon the bench; for he hath all the thoughts, the words and actions of your whole life written in the book of his omniscience, which your own consciences shall then give witness to, either for or against your selves. This St. John had long ago revealed to him, when he saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works, *Rev. xx. 12, 13.* And what St. John then saw in a vision, you shall see e'er long with your own eyes: For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, *2 Cor. v. 10.*

4. YOUR actions being all thus scanned, and your lives examined by the word of God, before this great God at his glorious appearing, he will then pass a final and irrevocable sentence upon all persons. Such as have truly repented of their sins and believed in the gospel, they being accepted of as righteous by the merits of Jesus Christ, shall have that blessed sentence pronounced upon them, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, Matt. xxv. 34.* The righteous being thus cleared from all indictments brought against them, they shall then with joy and triumph see the condemnation of the wicked world, even all impenitent and unbelieving persons, who having nothing to plead for themselves, will be soon found guilty; and will therefore have that dreadful sentence pass'd upon them, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, Matt. xxv. 41.* Sentence being thus passed, it will be accordingly executed: For *these, the wicked, shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal, ver. 46.* These are the great things which Christ shall do at his glorious appearing, and which shall make his appearing seem so glorious.

THE third thing which I promis'd to shew from these words, is, that that blessed hope which we look for at the glorious appearance of Christ, should excite and encourage us all to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. For this is the great argument which the apostle here useth, why we should learn and practise the lesson which the grace of God here teacheth, even to live soberly, righteously and godly; because we look for so much happiness and felicity, when Christ shall appear in glory: Looking, saith he, for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God; that is, looking for or expecting that blessedness we hope for at the glorious appearing of Christ: For the blessed hope is here put for the blessedness we hope for.

Now in speaking unto this, we must first consider what that blessedness is which we hope for, and which shall certainly be conferred upon all those in the world to come, that live soberly, righteously and godly in this: And then we shall easily shew how the expectation of so great a blessedness should put us upon the diligent and unwearied prosecution of true grace and virtue in this present world, as the only way whereby it is possible to attain unto it.

As to the *First*, You must not expect that I should give you a perfect description of that transcendent glory and happiness which is prepared in the world to come for all those that truly love and fear, honour and obey God in this; I being as unable to express what it is to you, as I am desirous to experience what it is in myself. Alas! we poor mortals upon earth that ordinarily converse with nothing but dirt and clay, cannot here behold the glory that shines above yonder glorious sun: Alas! we cannot so much as begin to look upon it, but our eyes are immediately dazzled: How then shall we be able to give a full description of it? No, that is more than can be expected from any one that was never there: That was never there did I say? Nay, I much question whether it be possible for them that are there, to express it to our capacities; or rather, I believe it altogether impossible: tho they feel it in themselves, they cannot tell it unto others. How much less can we, who never yet enjoyed it, be able to declare it fully unto others? Howsoever, that I may give you what light I can into it, I shall endeavour to intimate unto you what conceptions my self do, and you may entertain of it, that so you may be the more excited to look after it with all your might and main, and by consequence, to walk in the narrow path that leads unto it.

First, THEREFORE, so soon as ever any of you should be got to heaven, you will be immediately freed from whatsoever is evil.

1. You shall there be freed from the evil of sin, which is indeed the evil of all other evils; and if ye be true penitents, it cannot but be the greatest trouble you have in the world that you are guilty, and still subject unto sin. But if you be once acquitted from your sins before Christ's judgment-seat, and declared righteous by God himself, you shall be no more grieved at the remembrance of your former sins, nor groan under the insupportable weight and burden of them; but shall be as if you had never sinned at all. Here it cannot but make your hearts even sink within you to consider how ungrateful you have been to him that made you, and how heinously you have transgressed those righteous laws which he hath been pleased to enjoin you; the remembrance whereof cannot but sometimes make you cry out in the bitterness of your souls, woe unto us that we have sinned. But when once you are got to heaven, all tears, even of repentance it self, shall be wiped from your eyes; for your sins shall all be blotted out, and your transgressions remembered no more; neither by God, so as to punish you, nor yet by your selves, so as to be troubled for them: But you shall be as perfectly freed from them both in the court of heaven, as also of your own consciences, as if you had never been guilty of them nor defiled with them.

AND yet this is not all neither; for you will not only be there freed from the guilt, but also from the strength and filth of sin. As no transgression shall be imputed to you, so neither shall any corruption remain in you. So long as you are in the flesh, the flesh will be in you, *there being not a just man upon earth that doth good, and sinneth not*, Eccles. vii. 20. And if your hearts be truly converted and inclined to God, it cannot but be an exceeding grief and trouble to you, that you cannot obey and serve him with such a perfect heart, and a willing mind, as you ought and desire to do. But our comfort is, that when we come to heaven, as all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, so shall all sin be banished from our souls too. There will be no darkness in your minds, nor error in your judgments; no distraction in your thoughts, nor corruption in your conscience; no perverseness in your wills, nor disorder in your passions; no spot, no blot, no blemish, nor imperfection in your whole souls: But your souls will be all made *the spirits of just men made perfect*, Heb. xii. 23. And he that thinks not this an extraordinary happiness indeed, it is because he knows not as yet what true happiness is. For this is certainly the ground and foundation of all the happiness that we either are or can be capable of: For until our souls be thus freed from their infirmities, and reduced to their primitive and perfect frame and constitution, they are not in a capacity of enjoying the chiefest good, nor by consequence, of being happy. Neither doth this our freedom from sin, qualify us only for the enjoyment of happiness; but it is it self

too one great part of the happiness we desire to enjoy; it being no small part of happiness to be free from misery; which none can be that is not void of sin: But he that is void of sin, cannot but be upon that very account free from misery; sin being the only cause of all the misery in the world. And therefore it must needs rejoice our hearts to think of heaven, when we consider that we shall there ride triumphant over all those sins, which we are here so continually molested, and frequently foiled by: The consideration whereof, should make us, methinks, if it were lawful, even to envy the blessed estate of the glorified saints in heaven; or at least it should make us think the time long till we come to them, that as they now are, so we may be rid of all our lusts, freed from the tyranny of our headstrong corruptions, and made in our capacity holy as God is holy, and perfect as he is perfect. Oh! Who can but long and thirst after such a transcendent happiness as this is! especially considering that being freed from the evil of sin, we cannot but be freed from the evil of punishment too: for these two are inseparable companions; for no man is punished for any thing but sin: And therefore he that is absolved from all sin, must needs be discharged from bearing any punishment whatsoever. And yet this is the happy and blessed condition of all such as are in heaven: Whither, if any of you shall go, as I hope you all will, as you will not be guilty of any sin, so neither will you be obnoxious to any punishment or misery whatsoever. And so,

1. You will be there free from care and fear about the things of this world. For you will be no sooner got up to heaven, but you will presently trample upon all things here below, and look upon them as below you to look upon. I need not tell you what care you have all upon you for the concerns of this life; how desirous you are about the getting, how solicitous about the keeping, how fearful of losing the impertinent trifles of this transient world; what pains you take about them, running to and fro, from one place to another, in order either to get more, or else to keep what you have got already; you cannot but be all sensible of it, being I fear, for the most part, too subject to this misery of your own creating. But when once you arrive at the haven of eternal happiness, all this stir and bustle about such fading varieties, will immediately cease and dis-appear. You will then trouble your heads no more about such low and pitiful toys as these are, which perisheth in the using: For you will then see your selves so fully provided for, that you need not concern your selves, nor take care for the future; for you will have as much as you can desire: As much did I say, yea, and infinitely more too. And how great a happiness it will be to be freed from such cares and fears as you now have upon you, I need not tell you. I fear many of you know it but too well by your own experience, what miseries the men of this world undergo for the concerns of it; wracking their brains, distempering their bodies, hazarding their lives, breaking their sleep, and often distracting their minds about them: And therefore they may well be called misers; such persons being certainly as miserable creatures as any upon earth: But there are no such in heaven.

2. As you will be there freed from the carking and perplexing cares of this world; so you will be freed too from all the temptations of the devil. He here goes about like *a roaring lion, seeking daily whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. But he is confined only to these lower regions of the world; and being once cast down from heaven, he can never come there again. And therefore, if you be once got thither, you will then contemn his malice, and deride his power, as being infinitely too short to reach so high as you are got; so that as you shall have no corruptions within, so neither will you have any temptations from without you, to sin or vanity.

3. HENCE also you will be freed from the gnawings and disturbances of a guilty conscience; which none can tell how great a torture it is, but such as have it: They can acquaint you from their own experience, that no sorrow is like to theirs; who being made, as *Job* was, to possess the sins of their youth, their own consciences are armed against them, so that they have an intestine war, carried on within their own bowels, and that too with such violence and heat, that it bears down all before it; insomuch that such persons at such a time as this, have a kind of hell upon earth, and real misery in the midst of all their seeming jollity. And tho you all may not as yet have undergone the anguish of a fretted conscience in its height and fury, yet I believe there is none of you, but some time or other have had some intimations of it; and every one is continually obnoxious to its severest torments. But this lasts only while we are upon earth. In heaven there is no such thing as guilt;

guilt; and therefore there can be no guilty conscience there. No, could you look into the breasts of all the glorified saints which are now in heaven, you would not see so much as a cloud or mist there; much less any storm or tempest. No, there is nothing there but calmness, serenity and peace.

4. As you will there be at peace within your selves, so will you be at peace with God too, so as to have his wrath and anger towards you perfectly appeased. He never frowns upon any one that is once admitted into his court. It is true, he *is angry with the wicked every day*, Psal. vii. 11. But there are no wicked persons there; and by consequence none that he will be angry at. And verily, how light soever you may make of this at present, if ever any of you shall come to heaven, you will then find that to have God reconciled to you, and well pleased with you, is indeed the principal jewel in the crown of glory; there being no joy or pleasure, no comfort or happiness in the world, like that of apprehending God's special love and favour towards us. To see the supreme Being of the world well pleased with us, to see him smiling upon us, to see him demeaning himself as rejoicing over us, and delighting in us; Oh! Who is able to express the joy that must needs transport the hearts of such as behold this blessed sight!

5. As you shall be thus freed from all care, freed from all temptations, from Satan, from the torment of a guilty conscience, and the wrath of an incensed God; so you shall be freed likewise from the fear of ever being troubled with these things, or any thing else more. For the immunities and privileges granted to the new *Jerusalem*, the city that is above, are for ever, so as never to be revoked, infringed or violated: And that when you come to heaven, you will not only know, but be perfectly assured of; which will add a great lustre to them: For otherwise, the very fear of losing them would damp your comfort in the enjoying of them. But being always possessed with a firm belief and sure confidence that you shall never know what sin, or trouble, or fear is more; tho' this was all that heaven could afford you, yet it could not but be acknowledged to be a place that deserves to be earnestly desired and sought by all.

BUT if you consider in the next place, that the blessedness you hope for in the world to come, doth not only consist in freedom from all evil, but likewise in the enjoyment of whatsoever is good; this must needs enhance our esteem and desire of it; forasmuch as there is nothing that you can desire to make you happy, but in heaven you shall have it in its beauty and perfection: For there you shall have; What shall you have? *More than the eye ever saw, or ear heard, or the heart of man is able to conceive*; 1 Cor. ii. 9. And if no heart be able to conceive it, I am sure no mortal's tongue can be able to express it fully to you. And therefore, I could heartily wish, methinks, that an angel would come down for a while, and acquaint you with the glories that are above. But seeing we have no ground to expect that, I shall endeavour to stammer out my conceptions of them as well as I can.

First THEREFORE: So soon as ever you arrive at heaven, you will be immediately admitted into the society of the most glorious and perfect creatures that were ever made; angels, archangels, cherubims, seraphims, with all the powers of heaven, as well as glorified saints, receiving you into their friendship and company; so that instead of conversing with poor sinful mortals as you do upon earth, you will there keep company with pure and perfect, blessed and immortal spirits, whose innocent, pious and heavenly conversation cannot but be an exceeding pleasure and delight to you, who then will be like unto them.

2. NEITHER will you only have the happiness of enjoying the society of the best and purest creatures; but even of Christ himself. For you shall be where he is, and behold the glory which God hath given him, according as himself prayed you might, *John* xvii. 24. And verily, if you love the Lord Jesus Christ above all things else, as you must do before you can get to heaven; when you come there, it cannot surely but rejoice your hearts to live with him whom your souls love.

3. You shall not only behold Christ clothed with your own nature, but you shall likewise behold God himself unveiling his face, and discovering his glory and perfections to you. For here we see but as thro' a glass darkly; but there, face to face. Now we know but in part; but then we shall know, even as we are known, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. The meaning whereof is, that we shall then know, behold and contemplate the eternal God himself, the center of all perfections, as clearly, as fully, as perfectly as our natures either are, or can be made capable of. But here I must confess my self at a nonplus, not able to find out words whereby to express my own thoughts

thoughts concerning the greatness of that happiness which we hope to enjoy in beholding God, and in dwelling perpetually upon the contemplation of his divine perfections. Only this I may say in general, that this is certainly the only happiness that we were at first design'd and fitted for; all the faculties of our souls being so compos'd, that this the clear vision of God will fill and satisfy them altogether; so that our whole souls will be every way as full of joy and delight as they are able to contain. For our understandings being thus wholly taken up with the contemplation of God, our wills cannot but be fully bent and inclined to him, and our love and affections so enflamed towards him, that our whole souls shall be transported into nothing else but joy and pleasure, comfort and delight in the enjoyment of him.

THIS, this is the great, the exceeding great and transcendent happiness which the glorified saints and angels do now enjoy above yonder glorious sun. And this is that blessed hope, or the blessedness we hope for, when the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ shall appear in glory. And need I now tell you what I promised to shew in the last place; even that the consideration and expectation of such happiness as this is, should encourage and excite you all to the practice of true grace and virtue, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world? Will it not be superfluous to prove this now? Surely it will. For how is it possible to hear so much of heaven, and not desire to come thither? And how is it possible to desire to go to heaven in good earnest, and not to walk in the way that leads thither? Certainly it cannot but be impossible: Inasmuch that say what you please, plead what you can for your selves, you can never persuade me that you have any real desire to go to heaven, unless you use the utmost of your power *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.* For you cannot but all know that without this, you can never go to heaven; seeing that that very grace whereby alone it is possible for you to be saved, so expressly and plainly teacheth and obligeth all men to do these things in order to their being saved.

LET me therefore ask you seriously in the presence of Almighty God, Do you desire in good earnest to partake of the happiness we have now been speaking of, even to be all glorified saints in heaven, or do you not? If you do not, to what purpose do you come to church to learn how to get to heaven, when in the mean time, you care not whether ever you come there or no? But if you seriously desire to go thither, What mean you to continue still in the broad path that leads directly from it? Why is it that you do not follow your Saviour's counsel, even to deny your selves, take up your crosses and follow Christ, through all the duties and precepts which he hath been pleased to enjoin you? What do you think to go heaven any other way than that which Christ hath chalked out for you? Or do you expect to be saved any other way but by him? But what, hath not he told you as plain as he could speak, *That except ye repent, you must all perish?* Luke xiii. 3. Hath not he told you with his own mouth, *That except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven?* Mat. v. 20. Hath not he told you by his apostle, *That without holiness no man shall see the Lord?* Heb. xiv. 12. And is it not there expressly said likewise, *That the same grace of God that bringeth salvation to mankind, teacheth us likewise to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world?* With what confidence then can any of you expect to be saved hereafter without being holy here? What do you think to disannul the counsels, and revoke the decrees of heaven? To make Christ himself a liar, and his words of none effect? No, mistake not your selves; whatsoever becomes of you, be sure his word shall stand, and be made good: And by consequence in plain terms, you will all be damned and ruined to eternity, unless you repent and believe the gospel, so as to practise what *the grace of God* here teacheth: There is no help for it; for as men or angels cannot, so Christ will never save you upon any other terms; he hath told you so beforehand, and therefore you may believe him.

I SPEAK not this to frighten or discourage any of you, but so long as I am amongst you, you must give me leave to deal plainly with you. It is my hearty desire that every soul here present may be saved, and partake of those celestial joys which you have now been hearing of. But that, I am confident you can never do, unless you perform real, sincere and universal obedience to all the commands of God to the utmost of your power and knowledge. I should be a false prophet and deceiver
should

should I tell you otherwise. And therefore, if you have any desire to go to heaven, if you have any love for your own precious and immortal souls, be advised at length to dally no longer with eternity, nor make a mock of sin, or sport of holiness; but devote your selves in good earnest to the practice of whatsoever is required of you. You know, every man, the sins you have hitherto been addicted to, avoid them for the future as deadly poison and venom. You know the duties that are incumbent upon you, perform them all as for your lives; trusting in the merits of Christ for God's acceptance of them: For assure your selves, your eternal welfare depends upon these things. For *the grace of God, &c.*

S E R M O N X C I I I .

Holiness the great Design of the Gospel-Dispensation.

TITUS ii. 14.

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

THESE words are part of the argument which the apostle here brings, why we should live *soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*, and it adds a great deal of force and strength to it: For having minded us of the *blessed hope which we look for at the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*, that so he might excite and encourage us the more to the practice of what the grace of God here teacheth; he adds moreover for our better encouragement, what this great God, who then will appear in glory, hath done for us, in order to our attainment of the blessedness we hope for, when he shall thus appear *who gave himself for us that he might redeem us, &c.*

WHICH words containing the whole mystery of our salvation by Jesus Christ, we who hope to be saved by him, cannot but look upon our selves as highly concerned to understand the full meaning and intent of them: Which that I may explain unto you as clearly as possibly I can, without taking them in pieces, I shall give you the true sense and purport of the words as they lie in order; for indeed every word in the text is very emphatical and significant, and by consequence much to be observed by all that set themselves in good earnest to look after heaven and eternal glory.

As for the first word, *Who*, it needs not much explaining; for you cannot but all understand whom he means, or which is the antecedent to this relative, even *the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. Only it is to be observed, that for the right apprehending the mystery of our redemption by him, it is necessary that we understand those words conjunctly, not conceiving of Christ as only God, or only man, but as God-man; or as it is here more fully expressed, as *the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*; as one who being begotten of the Father from eternity, was there-

fore *the great God*; and being born of his mother in time, thereby became man, and being thus both God and man, is likewise our Saviour.

2. *WHO gave himself*; that is, who being *the great God gave himself to be made man*, Phil. ii. 6, 7. and being God and man, he gave himself to be betrayed, apprehended, accused, condemned, crucified, not only in appearance, but really and truly, ἀληθῶς ἀπέθανε, & δούκει & φαντασία, Ignat. And he gave himself voluntarily, freely, of his own accord, without any force, violence, or compulsion from any other. Judas indeed betrayed him to the Jews, but his betraying him had been in vain, unless Christ had given himself, John xviii. 4, 5. Pilate delivered him to the soldiers, but he could not have had that power over him, unless himself had given it him from above, John xix. 11. He was derided, scoffed at, accused and condemned as a malefactor; yet so that none could have spoken one word against him, had not himself given them breath to do it. He was crucified by the Jews, not because he could not help it, but because he would not. And when he was upon the cross, he died indeed, not because he could not save his own, but because he had a mind to save our lives: For they could not force his soul from his body, but he voluntarily gave up the ghost, and that too immediately after he had cried with a loud voice, *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit*, Luke xxiii. 46. And seeing he had so much strength still as to cry aloud, he could not have been so near death, but that himself was pleased to die, and that before the two malefactors that were crucified with him, whose legs were forced to be broken that they might die. When he was already dead, or had yielded up the ghost; or, as it is in the Greek, ἀφῆκε τὸ πνεῦμα, *emisit Spiritum*, he sent his Spirit from him; so that *emisit Spiritum non amisit*. Ambros. *Spiritum cum verbo sponte dimisit*. Tertul. *Non enim deseruit invitus, sed quia voluit, quum voluit, & quomodo voluit*. Aug. All was still done with his own will, as himself also assures us, John x. 17, 18. And hence it is that he is here said to have given himself. Who gave

3. *HIMSELF*. Himself, not gold, not silver, not lambs, not calves, nor men, but himself, 1 Pet. i. 28. Sometimes he is said to have given his flesh, John vi. 51. sometimes his body, Luke xxii. 19. sometimes his blood, v. 20. But here he is said to have given himself, his whole self, not only his soul or his body, but himself, soul and body, and all he had or was; himself, God-man, which was certainly the greatest gift that was ever given, the highest price that was ever paid for any thing in the world.

BUT what, or whom did he give himself for? For us: Who gave himself for us; not for himself, not for angels, but for us men; for us corrupt, sinful, and rebellious mortals upon earth; who by nature, are enemies to God, and to every thing that is good. It was for us that he gave himself, not only dying for our sakes, but in our steads; for which we must know that he is sometimes said to *give himself for our sins*, Gal. i. 4. that is, to make satisfaction to divine justice for them. But here he is said to have given himself for us; that is, he gave himself to suffer death in our steads, 1 Pet. iv. 1. Rom. v. 8.

AND that you may know wherefore Christ thus suffered for us; it follows, *who gave himself for us that he might redeem us*. For the opening of which, consider,

1. *GOD made man upright*, Eccl. vii. 29.

2. BUT upon commission of the first sin all mankind became obnoxious to death, which was before threatened against it, Gen. ii. 17. And it not standing with the justice and honour of God not to make good his word, and do as he hath said, hence the whole race of *Adam* are subject to death, even eternal as well as temporal, Rom. v. 17, 18.

3. HENCE Christ having undertaken to save or redeem us from that death which we are all obliged to suffer, it was necessary that he should undergo it for us; which he accordingly did: And his death being accepted of by God instead of ours, hence he is here said to have given himself for us, because he deliver'd up himself to suffer that death which was due to us. Hence also he is said properly to have redeemed us, because *he gave his life a ransom for us*, Matt. xx. 28. A ransom, that is, as the Greek word λύτρον signifies, a price of redemption. And so it is elsewhere said, *that he gave himself a ransom for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 6. ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων, a price of redemption for all; and so it is the same in effect with this in my text, *Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us*: For laying down his own life instead of ours, hereby he hath redeemed us from that obligation to death which we before lay under, he having undergone that death for us, which in the first *Adam* was threatened against us; so that God's justice being fully satisfied,

satisfied, we may escape that death which before we were subject to. Thus therefore it is that Christ hath redeemed us

FROM all iniquity. Which is the next expression to be considered, *That he might redeem us from all iniquity*, that is, from the guilt of sin, and from those obligations to death and punishment which our iniquities had brought upon us: so that now our iniquities shall not be imputed to us, nor we obliged to suffer for them, for none of them: *For he hath redeemed us from all iniquity*, both original and actual; from that contracted by our first parents, and from those which our selves have committed in our persons; whether they be sins of omission or sins of commission; sins of ignorance or sins of wilfulness; open or secret sins; sins of a lighter tincture, or sins of a deeper dye. *For he gave himself that he might redeem us from all iniquity.*

Oh blessed Jesu! when shall we be able to praise and magnify thy name, and to render thee thanks sufficient for this thy unspeakable love and compassion to fallen man! That ever thou shouldst regard and pity such worthless and sinful worms as we are, so far as to lay down thine own life to ransom ours! Who are we, or what was our father's house, that thou who inhabitest eternity, God co-equal with the Father in glory, power and majesty, infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thine own perfections; that thou shouldst vouchsafe to condescend so far as to take our frail nature into thine own all-glorious and divine Person, and in it to suffer for those very sins which we ungrateful wretches have committed against thy self; that thou shouldst come down from heaven to earth only to raise us up from earth to heaven; that thou, the Son of God, shouldst become the Son of man, that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God; that thou shouldst be derided, that we might be honoured; thou condemned, that we might be absolved; and die, that we might live! Oh! what tongue is able to express, what heart to conceive how infinitely we are all obliged to love and serve thee, to praise and honour thee, to bless and magnify thy name unto all eternity; who gavest thy self for us that thou mightest redeem us from all iniquity; and not only so, but purify to thy self a peculiar people! Indeed this is that which perfecteth our redemption, and maketh it both full and effectual, and therefore it deserveth to be seriously weighed and considered by us: For we must not think that our Saviour came into the world only to expiate our sins, and to take off our obligations to punishment for them; but he came likewise to cleanse us from our sins, and to make us holy: Or, as it is here expressed, *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and also purify to himself a peculiar people.* Where we may observe,

1. THAT one great end why *Christ gave himself for us*, was, *that he might purify us*; that is, make us pure and holy, good and pious creatures. For the opening of which we must know,

1. WE by nature are all defiled with sin as well as guilty of it, our hearts being naturally averse from whatsoever is good, and inclined to evil; and all the faculties of our souls so out of tune, that we can do nothing as we ought to do it.

2. So long as we are in this condition we are altogether incapable of enjoying God, and by consequence, of being happy; for our happiness consisteth only in the vision and fruition of the chiefest good: In order unto which, it is indispensably necessary that our minds be bent, and our wills and affections inclined towards him, otherwise it is impossible for us to take any pleasure or delight in the beholding and enjoying of him; or rather it is impossible for us to behold and enjoy him at all. But so long as we remain in the same condition wherein we came into the world, without repenting or being converted to him, it is plain that we have no propensity at all, or inclination towards him; but have rather a strange kind of averfeness from him, if not an absolute antipathy against him; as one not only unlike but directly contrary to our impure and sinful temper and disposition. And therefore, until our minds be changed, and our inclinations taken off from sin and turned unto God; that is, in scripture-language, until we have repented, and so be made truly holy and like to God, we are no more capable of enjoying any complacency and satisfaction in the contemplation of the divine perfections, nor indeed of contemplating aright upon them, than a blind man is capable of distinguishing colours, or a deaf man of being ravish'd with sounds; no more than a brute beast is capable of surfeiting himself upon the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration. This is all our conditions by nature; thus it is, and thus it will be with us, until our minds be altered, and our souls converted from sin to God, 'till then, as we

shall not enjoy heaven though we could, so we cannot though we might, not being at all qualified for the participation of such pure and spiritual joys as those are.

3. HENCE our blessed Saviour having undertaken to save and bring us to heaven, it was necessary that he should likewise fit and qualify us for the enjoyment of the happiness which is to be there had; which he therefore accordingly undertook to do, by cleansing us from our sins, and purifying us to himself. And that this was one great and principal end of his taking our flesh upon him, and dying or giving himself for us, is not only expressly asserted here in my text, but it is plain likewise from the whole tenour of the gospel, which teacheth us all along, that as he came to reconcile God to us, by dying for our sins, so he came to reconcile us to God by cleansing us from our sins, and making us truly holy. For *his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. And he was sent *to bless us, in turning away every one of us from his iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. So that *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*, 1 John i. 7. Yea, *he was therefore called Jesus*, that is, a Saviour, because *he came to save his people from their sins*, Mat. i. 21. that is, from the filth and power, as well as from the guilt and punishment of sin. And he therefore *gave himself for us, that he might sanctify us throughout, and make us holy and without blemish*, Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.

4. CHRIST thus giving himself for us, not only to redeem us from all iniquity, but also that he might purify us to himself; hence by his death and passions he did not only satisfy God's justice for our sins, but likewise merited the power of bestowing the Spirit upon us, and so of infusing true grace and virtue into us, whereby we may be enabled to forsake our former sins, and for the future to perform sincere and evangelical obedience to all the moral law: So that as our persons are justified only by his merit imputed, so are our natures sanctified by his Spirit imparted to us; whereby,

1. HE enlightens our minds and rectifies our judgments concerning all things that have any reference to our future estate; cheering up our apprehensions concerning God, and possessing our hearts with a due sense of his greatness, power and glory, and with a thorough belief that he is the chiefest good, and that happiness can be had in none but him; convincing us also of the sinfulness of sin and the beauty of holiness, of the vanity of all things here below, and of the glory that is above. And it is a true saying of St. *Austin*, *Non minus necessarium esse menti illuminationem, quam oculis lumen*.

2. HE purifies or amends the will, inclining it to follow the dictates of the practical understanding, so as to chuse what it represents as truly good, and to refuse what it dictates to be evil. This is the great blessing which God hath promised under the notion of *a new heart, and a new spirit*, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. Whereby such as are in Christ are made new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 17. For all their affections are by this means turned into another channel, and are fixed upon new objects.

3. HENCE our actions always following the temper and inclination of our minds, they also become pure and holy, or at least such as God for Christ's sake will accept of.

THUS it is that Christ purifieth us to himself; and thus you and I may be purified by him, and shall too, if we do but sincerely endeavour to do what we can our selves, and trust in him for his assistance to enable us to do what otherwise we cannot: So that now, if we be not all pure and holy, if we be not all as real and true saints as ever lived, it is our own fault: For Christ is always present and ready to assist us, if we do but apply our selves unto him for it; and himself hath told us, that *such as come to him he will in no wise reject*, John vi. 37. Oh! what cause then have we all to praise and to give thanks unto him, and to say as it is, *Rev. i. 5, 6*.

BUT it is to be further considered, that as Christ came to purify us, so he purifieth us to himself; for *he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people*: So that one great reason why he purifies us, is, that we should for the future be his; not sin's, not Satan's, not the world's, not our own, but wholly his, his real disciples, his faithful servants, his peculiar and obedient people. For the better understanding of which we must consider,

1. MAN was created in a free estate, subject to none but God, under whom he was constituted lord and master of all terrestrial creatures, every thing upon earth being subject to his power, as his body was to his soul, his senses to his will, his will to his reason, and his reason unto God.

2. BY sinning against his Maker, he thereby forfeited all his power, and became a mere slave and vassal to all things which before were subject to him; so that now we are all born slaves, slaves to sin, slaves to the world, slaves to Satan, slaves to our own lusts and corruptions, *Rom. vi. 17. 2 Pet. ii. 19. 2 Tim. ii. 26.* And the reason is, because we are *sold under sin*, *Rom. vii. 14.* and that not only by our first parents, but too apparently by our selves; for naturally we are like *Ahab, who sold himself to work evil in the fight of the Lord*, *1 Kings xxi. 20.*

AND hence it comes to pass that sin exercises so much power and tyranny over us, that we are never our own men, being always at the beck and command of sin; as you may all find by too sad and daily experience, one sin drawing you this way, and another sin dragging you that way, as it self pleaseth.

3. CHRIST came to redeem us from this thralldom, and assert us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, by subduing our sins under us, and so purifying us to himself, that we should no longer be at sin's, but at his service and command, so as not to regard the dictates of our own carnal reason, nor yet the precepts of our own headstrong corruptions; but devoting our selves wholly to observe those laws and commands which he hath laid upon us. For this was one great end why he redeemed us, and it is the only recompence that we can give him for it. And moreover, there is all the reason in the world that we should give our selves to him who gave himself for us, and laid down so great a price as his own blood for our redemption to himself: To himself I say; for it is in the nature of all purchases and redemptions, that they that purchase or redeem a thing, have it for the future to themselves. How much more in this, the greatest purchase that ever was made, the Son of God himself having redeemed us with the price of his own blood. Surely we cannot but be infinitely obliged to live to him that died for us, so as to employ all the faculties of our souls and members of our bodies in his service, and for his glory. As the apostle argues, *1 Cor. vi. 20.*

NEITHER is it sufficient that we be Christ's people only in general; but we must be too his peculiar people. For so saith the apostle, *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people*; *λαὸν ἁγίον, a dear, a precious, an excellent people above all other.* In the old testament it answers the Hebrew word *סגל*: which the 70 render by *λαὸς ἁγίος*, and we by a *peculiar people*, *Deut. xiv. 2.* sometimes a *special people*, *Deut. vii. 6.* sometimes a *peculiar treasure*, *Exod. xix. 5.* *Psal. cxxxv. 4.* sometimes *his jewels*, *Mal. iii. 17.* The Targum always interprets it by *רַבִּינִי beloved*, or a *people beloved*. Symmachus renders it *ἐξαιρετός, a special, a singular, an excellent people.*

AND verily such as Christ effectually purifies to himself, are indeed a peculiar people from all other people in the world.

1. THEY are a people of a peculiar temper and disposition from all other people. As *Caleb* is said to have been a man of another spirit from the rest of the children of *Israel*, *Numb. xiv. 24.* so are all such as Christ purifies; they are quite of another spirit from the men of this world, they have other thoughts, other affections, other desires, other hopes, other fears, other designs in the world than other men use to have; so that altho they live and converse in the world without being conceited of themselves, or censuring others, yet they are a singular and peculiar people of themselves, as different from all other people as light is from darkness, as heaven is from earth, as holiness is from sin. For while all the rest of the world lies in wickedness, these do not only seem to be holy, and make a shew of piety; but they really and truly are a holy people, a people set apart and consecrated wholly unto God. And therefore a holy and peculiar people still go together, *Deut. vii. 6. Ch. xiv. 2.* And for this it is that God avoucheth them to be his peculiar people, that so they may *keep all his commandments*, *Deut. xxvi. 18.* This is that which makes them so beloved of God, that he reckons them his treasure, his jewels, his special and peculiar people; because they have his image stamped upon them, and so are like to him, holy as he is holy; Christ himself having purified them to himself, and so made them his pure, and by consequence his peculiar people.

2. SUCH may justly be called a peculiar people also because they have peculiar names and titles given to them in the holy scriptures. God having a peculiar propriety in them, he is therefore pleased to call them by peculiar names, whereby they may be distinguished from the rest of mankind. For they are called in scripture kings and priests, and asserted to be made so by Christ who purifies them to

himself a peculiar people, Rev. i. 6. Neither are they called only kings and priests; but in the very abstract, a kingly or royal priesthood, 1 Pet. ii. 9. So that as they are made new creatures, so are they called by new names, Isa. lx. 2, 3, 4.

3. THEY are honoured likewise with peculiar relations. For they who before might say to corruption thou art our Father, and to the worm thou art our mother and our sister, Job xvii. 14. may now say to the eternal God, thou art our Father; to the church, thou art our mother; and to Christ himself, thou art our brother. For God himself vouchsafeth to call himself their Father, Luke xii. 32. yea, and their Husband too, Isa. liv. 5. Hos. ii. 16. The church is their mother, Gal. iv. 26. Eph. v. 32. And Christ calls them his brethren, John xx. 17. Rom. viii. 29.

4. THEY are invested with peculiar privileges, such as all other persons have no right or title to at all. For they have free admittance into God's presence, and his ear is always open to their prayer, Mat. xxi. 22. Yea, and whatsoever God himself doth that hath any relation to them, it shall some way or other conduce to their good and comfort, Rom. viii. 28. πάντα συνεργεῖ, all things work together; all things that God doth by his ordinary providence, and if our necessity require, all things which he can do by his extraordinary power.

5. THEY are endowed with peculiar interests: Tho they may have little or nothing of this world's goods, yet they are worth more than all the world besides. As our Saviour said, His kingdom was not of this world; so neither doth their estate lie here, but it lies in Christ's kingdom, that is, in the other world. They are interested in all his merits, and whatsoever he hath purchased by his death and sufferings; interested in all the promises of the gospel sealed unto them in the blood of Christ; interested in all the properties of God; his wisdom, power and goodness being all engaged for them: Interested in the prayers of all the saints upon earth: And interested in all the influences of the holy Spirit to guide and direct them in all their ways.

6. THEY are enstated in a peculiar inheritance, being heirs of God, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, and so they are entituled to, and enstated in a kingdom, James ii. 5. In the city of God, Heb. xii. 22. And eternal life, Tit. iii. 7. So that they shall be picked out of the rest of all mankind at the end of the world, to live with God, to behold his glory, admire his perfections, and enjoy his presence for ever.

THIS honour have all the saints, who may well be termed a peculiar people, seeing they have a peculiar temper, names, relations, privileges, interests and inheritance, all different from other people, and peculiar to themselves; whom Christ is therefore here asserted to have purified to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Zealous of good works; that is the greatest reason why they are Christ's peculiar people, because they serve him in a peculiar manner, being zealous of good works; not zealous for needless opinions; not zealous for idolatry and superstition; not zealous for parties and factions in the church; but zealous of good works. They are the proper objects of our zeal, as having an immediate respect to the glory of God, the ultimate end of all our actions, Gal. iv. 18. And whatsoever zeal we have, unless it be for good works, it is both useless and dangerous. Be sure it is not the zeal of Christ's peculiar people; for those he purifies to himself to be zealous of good works, to prosecute and practise them with all the life and vigour, with all the zeal and fervency that they can. But here we shall consider briefly two things:

1st, WHAT we are here to understand by good works. For which we must know that there are three things required to the making up of good works. It is necessary that the matter we do be good: That the end for which we do it be good: And that the manner of our doing it be good too. The matter must be such as God hath commanded, or at least allows of. For if it be any way contrary to the revealed will of God, whatsoever pretences men may make, be sure it cannot be good. And be the matter of an action ever so good, yet it is no good work, unless the end be so too. For tho a good end cannot make a bad action good; yet a bad end will always make a good action bad. And therefore, whatsoever we do, we must be sure to avoid all bad and sinister ends and aims in the doing of it, as carnal interest, popular applause, vain glory, and the like; but our eye must be fixed principally upon the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. Neither must we only regard the matter and end of our actions; but we must have a care how we perform them too, even with humility, faith, and obedience unto God. For no man can do a good work,

work, that doth not therefore do it because it is good, and so obey God in the doing of it. Where all these things concur, the work is good; where any one of them is wanting the whole is bad and sinful.

2dly, WHAT is it to be zealous of good works? It implies,

1. THAT their minds are bent and inclined to the doing of good works, so as to be willing and ready upon all occasions to *do good*, 1 Tim. vi. 18. That they be desirous of, and take pleasure in the doing of them; that they rejoice to *do good*, Eccles. iii. 12. and *delight greatly in God's commands*, Psal. cxii. 1. Psal. cxix. 143.

2. THAT they study, contrive and endeavour all ways imaginable to do all the good they can in their generation, so as to be always employed with zeal and earnestness in doing not only some, but all sorts of good works whatsoever; whether works of piety towards God, works of charity to the poor, or works of justice and equity towards all; pressing with undaunted courage and resolution thro all difficulties whatsoever, to obey God and keep his commandments, so as never to be discouraged from doing good by any danger which we may seem to incur by it. Thus the apostles manifested themselves to be Christ's peculiar people, zealous of good works, by their care and diligence, by their zeal and constancy in propagating the gospel, maugre all the opposition that was made against them; nothing being able to deter them from it. And this we may lay down as a most certain truth, that as no man can get any good by doing ill, so neither can any man get harm by doing good.

3. THEY that would be zealous of good works, do not only do good works themselves, but stir up others likewise to the doing of them. For he that is truly zealous himself, cannot but endeavour to make others as zealous as himself is; and therefore to manifest our selves to be zealous of good works, we must follow the apostle's counsel, Heb. x. 24.

THUS I have endeavoured to explain unto you the great ends of our Saviour's coming into the world, *who gave himself for us*, &c. Now from what you have heard, none of you but may observe, that as Christ came to save you from hell, and to bring you unto heaven; so in order thereunto, he came to save you from your sins, and to make you holy. And therefore he expects that all you who hope to be saved by him, should be *a peculiar people zealous of good works*. He expects that you be eminent for piety and religion towards God, as also for charity and righteousness towards men; that you shine as lights in the world, Mat. v. 16. He expects that you do not content your selves with the bare profession of his religion, nor yet with reading the scriptures, hearing of sermons, and praying now and then; but that you strive and study to excel the heathenish moralists, the Jewish and Christian *Pharisees*, yea and your former selves too, in all true grace and virtue, in humility, in meekness, in temperance, in patience, in self-denial, in contempt of the world, in justice, in charity, in heavenly-mindedness, in faith, in praying, in fasting, *in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6. What now remains but that knowing your Master's will, you should all do it? You see Christ came into the world to make you his *peculiar people, zealous of good works*: And such you must be before ever you come to heaven. Let me therefore sollicite and beseech you in Christ's stead abandon and forsake all your former practices which you know to be contrary to his pleasure and command; and for the future live like Christians indeed, like Christ's own proper and peculiar people: Devote every thing you have, every thing you are, every thing you can do wholly to his service and honour; make now religion both your business and recreation; esteem it, as it is, your highest honour to honour him, and your chiefest pleasure to please him. Do not only do good works, but be zealous in the doing of them; never thinking that you can do enough for him that hath done and suffered so much as Christ hath done for you: still trusting on the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, both for the pardon of your defects, and for the acceptance both of your persons and performances before God. Do this and your souls shall live: Leave this undone, and your selves will be undone for ever. And think not to say within your selves, that this is more than you can do; and that you being conscious of your own infirmities, fear that you can never attain to so high a pitch of grace and virtue as Christ requireth of you. For whosoever thou art that thinkest so with thy self, I dare assure thee in the name of Christ, that if thou dost but endeavour after it as well as thou canst, he himself will enable thee to attain

attain fully unto it. Tho thou beest weak, he is strong; and if thou dost but apply thy self aright to him, he will purify thee to himself one of his *peculiar people, zealous of good works*. This was the great end of his coming into the world; and therefore you need not fear either his willingness, or his power to do it. Why therefore dost thou complain of the power of sin, and labour under the burden of it? Go to Christ and he *will give thee rest*, Mat. xi. 28. Do you therefore but sincerely endeavour to do what possibly you can your selves, and trust in him for his assistance of his grace and spirit, as well as for pardon and forgiveness; and then you cannot miss of either. By this means every soul here present may be so purified as to be admitted into the number of God's *peculiar people, zealous of good works*; and by consequence be admitted e'er long to heaven, there to praise him *who gave himself*, &c.

S E R M O N XCIV.

Christ's Life a Pattern of Holiness to Christians.

I P E T. i. 15.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of Conversation.

NOTHING being more certain than that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, nothing surely can be more necessary than to know what this holiness is, and how to attain unto it: A question which all mankind of whatsoever estate or condition they be, are equally concerned to understand, in order to their being happy. For as it is impossible for any one to be happy that is not first holy; so it is impossible likewise for any one to be holy that doth not first know what it is to be so. Neither is this so easy a matter to know as it is generally thought to be; as is plain from the various opinions there are in the world concerning it. For if we consult the lives and actions of men, especially of those that make the greatest pretences to holiness, we may easily observe how strangely they differ in their notions about holiness. For some place holiness only in external rites and ceremonies, in saying a great many *Ave-Maria's* and *Pater-Noster's*, in living a monastical life, on going on pilgrimage to some monument or relick of a canonized saint, in bowing to images, in hearing mass whether they understand it or no, and especially in falling down before a consecrated wafer when it is carried triumphantly in procession. Others are of a quite contrary opinion, placing their holiness in opposing all manner of rites and ceremonies, in expressing no reverence at all in the service and worship of almighty God, in long *extempore* prayers, in frequent hearing of sermons, and receiving the sacrament without kneeling, and in separating themselves from other people as to religious matters. Nay, there have been, and I fear still are, too many that abuse the sacred name of holiness to palliate their most atrocious crimes, and barbarous impieties: Some running into schism and sedition, others practising treason and rebellion, and all under the pretence of holiness. But holiness is unquestionably a thing

thing of another nature than such deluded mortals would make it. For be sure it is the greatest excellency, that it is possible for creatures to be endued with; and therefore to mistake in that, is certainly the most dangerous and pernicious error that any of us can fall into, especially considering that it is absolutely impossible for any of us either to attain to happiness, or to avoid everlasting destruction, unless we be really and truly holy, in that sense as we are required to be in the holy scriptures.

FEARING therefore that many of you may be mistaken in a matter of such consequence as this is, so as to think your selves holy when you are not, and heartily desiring that you should all be so truly holy here as to be perfectly happy hereafter, I have chosen these words, from whence to explain unto you the true nature of holiness; of that holiness *without which you can never see God*, nor be happy neither in this world, nor yet in that which is to come. And to understand this, I know no text in all the scriptures more proper and apposite than the words I have now read. *But, as he which hath called you is holy, &c.*

FROM whence we might first observe that something of the nature of holiness may be gathered from what it is here opposed to, even to the lusts which men in their ignorant and unregenerate estate are addicted to, *ver. 14.* Whence it is plain that holiness is contrary to all manner of base, carnal, and earthly lusts or desires, *ταῖς πρότερον ἐπιθυμίαις*, such lusts as sinful and worldly-minded men are fashioned and conformed to, before they come to the knowledge of the truth: Which the apostle comprehends under three heads: *The lusts of the flesh; the lusts of the eye; and, the pride of life*, 1 John ii. 16. Where *the lusts of the flesh* denote the desire of carnal pleasures; *The lusts of the eye*, the desire of worldly riches; *The pride of life*, the desire of popular applause and vain-glory: Which kind of desires argue a strange degeneracy and impurity in the soul, and therefore holiness here is directly opposed to them, as taking off our desires and inclinations from such low, unworthy, and impure objects, and raising them up to objects suitable and proper for them. From whence we may conclude, that so long as a man indulgeth such vain and sinful desires as these are, he is no holy man. So long as your minds are set upon either the pleasures, the profits, or the honours of this present life, whatsoever pretences you make to holiness, you are not holy in that sense wherein you are here commanded to be so, as is plain from the antithesis or opposition which the apostle here makes betwixt such desires and being holy. *But, &c.*

BUT I shall not insist any longer upon that now; because my principal design is to search out, and by the blessing of God, to explain unto you the true nature of holiness in it self from these words: Wherein I desire you to observe three things:

- I. THE pattern of holiness: *As he who hath called you is holy.*
- II. THE command that is here laid upon us: *So be ye holy.*
- III. The extent and latitude of this holiness: *In all manner of conversation.*

THE first thing to be considered, is that which is here first placed, even the pattern of holiness, even God himself, whose holiness is here asserted to be the pattern and example of ours. And therefore, we can never understand what it is for our selves to be holy, unless we first know in what sense God is said to be holy: for our holiness is said to be in its capacity conformable and like to his: For as he is holy, so are we bound to be holy too; for nothing can be more plain, than that by him who is here said to have called us, we are to understand God: For it is he, and he alone, who hath called us from darkness to light, from error to truth, from sin to holiness, and from idolatry to the true religion. And yet you see it is here expressly said, *As he*, that is, *as God who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy.*

BUT now for the holiness of God, we must first know, that holiness is such an essential attribute or property in God, that he is not only often said to be holy, but he is frequently termed in a peculiar manner, *the holy One of Israel*, Psal. lxxxix. 18. Isa. xvi. 7. Isa. xxx. 12. and simply or absolutely, *the holy One*, Isa. xl. 25. Hab. i. 12. Hence as he is sometimes said to swear by himself, so elsewhere he is said to have *sworn by his holiness*, Psal. lxxxix. 35. Amos iv. 2. From whence it appears that holiness is that perfection whereby God delighteth to express his essence, and to distinguish himself from all other beings. And therefore, altho the idols of the heathens are

often in scripture termed Gods, yet they are never as I remember called holy ones, as the Lord is, for indeed they were not holy. *For there is none holy as the Lord,* 1 Sam. ii. 2.

THESE things being considered, it is easy to observe in the next place, that holiness as attributed unto God, denotes his peerless or super-eminent excellency above all things else, his infinite and supreme majesty and glory, in comparison whereof there is no such thing as glory or greatness in the world: So that to say that God is holy, or the holy One, is as much as to say, that he is a Majesty of incomparable goodness, of incomparable wisdom, of incomparable power, of incomparable glory, infinitely beyond whatsoever else can be called good or wise, or powerful or glorious. Hence when the quire of heaven would express the unparalleled excellency of his nature, and so give him the glory due unto his name, they sing out that *Trisagium* so often used by the primitive church, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory,* Isa. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8. This is the sum and substance of all that the glorified saints and angels do in heaven, even to agnize and celebrate the holiness of God; or to do that which we continually pray may be done, when we say, *Hallowed, or sanctified, be thy name*; that is, let all the world acknowledge thee to be the holy One, the supreme and super-eminent Being in the world, far exalted above all things else, and therefore to be admitted, adored, and worshipped by whatsoever is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, according to the song of the seven angels, Rev. xv. 3, 4. This therefore is our God, whom we and all the world are bound to worship; and this is his holiness, essential and peculiar to him alone, and incommunicable to any creature.

HAVING thus discovered what we are to understand by the holiness of God, we are now in the second place to consider in what sense we are here commanded to be holy as he is holy. For which end there are two things to be searched into. 1. What is the true nature of holiness in general, as attributed in scripture unto creatures, and as we are here enjoined to be holy. 2. In what sense we are commanded to be holy as God is holy.

First, I say, we must consider what is the true nature and property of holiness or sanctity in creatures, according to its notion in the sacred scriptures. For which we must know first in general, that as holiness when attributed to God, denotes his most excellent majesty and super-emineny above all things, so likewise when it is attributed to creatures, it denotes their exaltation and preheminance above other things, and their separation to something more excellent and divine; so that, as *R. D. Kimchi*, a learned Rabbi, rightly observes, in the scripture all words of sanctity or holiness import a thing separated from other things, by way of excellency or preheminance, as is plain from *Deut. xix. 2, 7.* compared with *Josh. xx. 7.* ויִּפְדֶּם אֶת־הָאֱדוּמִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהָאֲמֹנִי וְהָכְנַזִּי וְהָחִיטִּי. *And they sanctified.* The same appears from *Exod. xxx. 31, 32, 33, and 35, &c.* From whence it is plain, that this oil and this perfume was a peculiar oil and perfume, set apart and distinguished from others, both as to its use and composition; and upon that account it is here called an holy oil, and an holy perfume, though not in its own nature, yet by the reason of its distinction and separation from other things of the same nature, to higher and more excellent uses. The same notion of holiness may be still further illustrated from the several descriptions that God himself maketh of an holy people, by which we may clearly understand in what sense we are here commanded to be holy. This you may see, *Levit. xx. 24, 25, 26. Deut. xiv. 2. Ch. xxvi. 18, 19.* From whence it is easy to observe, that to be an holy people, in the idiom of the scriptures, is to be a singular and peculiar people; a people distinguished from others by way of excellency; a people advanced above the common estate and condition of others. From which premises duly considered, we may gather both what is not and what it is to be holy, so as we are here commanded to be. First what it is not to be holy; for,

1. It is plain that holiness doth not consist only in external rites, duties or performances, nor in antick habits or long prayers; nor in talking demurely, or running into corners to hear sermons; for these things a man may do, and yet be unholy and sinful still. Nor yet doth holiness consist either in the using or abstaining from ceremonies and things indifferent in the worship of God: for a man may use them, and a man may abstain from them; a man may be for them, and a man may be

be against them, and yet be unholy and sinful still. Much less doth holiness consist in opposing government, in raising rebellion, or in sowing sedition either in church or state; for he that doth these things, whatsoever he pretends, is an unholy and sinful man. Nay, to go further still, a man may be very zealous for the religion he is of, and spend and be spent in the defence of it; he may dispute, and write, yea, and fight too for it, and yet be as far from holiness as if he was of no religion at all: For although holiness may, and ought to express it self in our actions, yet it is not seated in them. And therefore, although he that is holy cannot but do all manner of good works, yet a man may do a great many good works and yet not be an holy man; for holiness doth not only advance some of a man's actions, but his whole self too above the common estate of mankind.

2. It is plain also that holiness, as it doth not consist in the performance of external duties only, so neither doth it consist in the exercise only of some particular internal graces and virtues, how specious and plausible soever they may appear in the eyes of men: For as holiness is not any particular act, or grace it self, but the truth, and grace, as I may so speak, of all graces; so neither can any particular acts or graces whatsoever denominate a man to be truly holy; for verily a man may go a great way, and yet not be an holy man, *Ex. Gr.* Thou mayst come to church and hear sermons with a great deal of seeming reverence and attention, and yet not be an holy man, *Ezek. xxxiii. 31.* Thou mayst pray with a great deal of earnestness and devotion, and yet be no holy man, *Isa. i. 15.* Thou mayst *prophecy in Christ's name, and in his name cast out devils*, and yet not be an holy man, *Matth. vii. 22.* Thou mayst *give all thy goods to feed the poor, and thy body to be burned for thy religion*, and yet not be an holy man, *1 Cor. xiii. 3.* Thou mayst be very nice and scrupulous in matters of religion and holiness, and yet not be a truly religious and holy man, *Matth. xxiii. 25, &c.* What shall I say more? Thou mayst have some kind of fear and dread of God, some kind of love and affection for him, some faint wishes and desires to serve him, some kind of pleasure and delight in the performance of holy duties, some sorrow for thy sins, and resolutions against them, some esteem for holiness and value for it, and yet not be truly an holy man. If holiness consisted only in the performance of some duties, or in the exercise only of some virtues, we should have a great many more saints upon earth than I fear there are. Neither would it be so hard a matter to be holy, as be sure it is. But holiness certainly is a larger and more comprehensive thing, than to be confined within the narrow compals of any particular acts, or virtues whatsoever: For to be holy, as I have shewn in general, implies a man to be advanced above the ordinary rank of men, set apart and dedicated wholly to more excellent acts and uses than other men; so that the true nature of holiness consisteth especially in two things.

1. In being taken off or separated from whatsoever debaseth or pollutes the soul; for holiness, as it imports excellency, must needs be contrary to whatsoever is *unclean or filthy*, as it is opposed to it, *1 Cor. vii. 14.* as also to a common, *unholy thing*, *κωινόν*, *Heb. x. 29.* For *common and unclean* are both opposed to holiness, *Acts x. 14.* because what is unclean defiles the soul, and what is common debaseth it. And therefore, in order to your being holy, it is necessary; First, That your souls be not tainted or defiled with sin, which is the only uncleanness that the soul is capable of, and that which makes it loathsome and abominable in the sight of God. Hence *David*, when he would express his desires of being holy, he pray'd *to be washed and cleansed from his sins*, *Psal. li. 2, 7.* And therefore till your souls be thus washed and purged from your lusts and corruptions, whatsoever outward shews you make of piety, you are still but unclean and sinful creatures. Neither are you truly holy until you are cleansed from all your defilements, and also advanced above what is common, that is, above the things of this world, the desires whereof lower and debase the soul, and by consequence make it profane or unholy. Hence *Esau* is said to be a *profane person*, only because he preferred earthly before heavenly things, *Heb. xii. 16.* And so, whosoever amongst you have any real love for this world, and value it so far as to make it your great business to get riches, honours, or the like, whatsoever pretences you make of holiness, you are like *Esau*, unholy and profane persons: For true holiness always implies the soul's freedom from, and advancement above whatsoever is unclean or common.

2. HENCE, if you would understand clearly what true holiness is, take it in few terms: It is nothing else but the rectitude, or the right frame and disposition of the

the whole man, consisting in nothing less than a due temperance of all the faculties of the soul and members of the body, such as each of them had at their first creation, whereby every faculty of the soul and member of the body confines it self within those limits, and discharges those offices which he that made them did at first enjoin them; the understanding, will and affections being all placed upon their proper objects, such as at first were designed for them: So that holiness is no particular grace or healing of some diseases in the soul, but it is a catholicon, an universal medicine, that cures the soul of all its maladies, and reduceth all its powers and faculties to their proper temper, to a sound frame and constitution; which though it be not perfectly effected in this life, yet it is for the most part, so that no distemper is any longer predominant in it. This it is to be truly holy indeed, when the soul hath attained such an excellent frame and disposition, that it is wholly carried out to God and goodness.

BUT that you may still more clearly apprehend the true notion of holiness, I shall endeavour to explain more particularly unto you, what kind of frame and disposition it is, which can properly be termed holiness, whereby the souls of some men are advanced to so high a degree of excellency above others: For which we must know there are three things especially to be considered in the souls of men, their understanding, will and affections, in the right disposition whereof true holiness doth principally consist.

1. THEREFORE, he that is truly holy hath his understanding rightly informed, and his apprehensions cleared concerning God, so as to have an experimental knowledge of him: I call it an experimental knowledge, to distinguish it from those abstruse notions and metaphysical speculations which a man may have concerning God, and yet not be a holy man. And by it I mean such a knowledge of God, as none can rightly apprehend but they that have it, consisting in a due sense of his greatness, goodness, and glory upon one's own heart; whereby we have such enlarged, and as I may so say, sensible conceptions of him, as to apprehend him infinitely great and good, wise and powerful, yea so as to apprehend him infinitely beyond our highest apprehensions of him. And whosoever thus knows God, cannot but be so ravished with his beauty and glory, as to be always taken up with the contemplations of him: So that his soul is in a manner always fixed upon God, where it ought continually to be, still admiring and adoring the vast confluence of perfections which are centred in him. This it is to be holy indeed, and without such a sense and knowledge of God as this is, you can never pretend to be holy; and therefore *David* first adviseth to know God, before it is possible to be so holy as to serve him, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Neither is it possible thus to know God, but you must of necessity be often thinking and meditating upon him, as *David* was, *Psal.* cxxxix. 18. And therefore, so long as you can go day after day without ever thinking seriously upon God, you may be confident you do not know him, and by consequence are sinful and unholy creatures; for so *David* describes a wicked man, *Psal.* x. 4. But when the soul is possessed with such a sense of God, as will draw all its thoughts towards him, and fix them mostly if not always upon him, that is certainly so far an holy soul.

2. THE understanding being thus restored to its proper habit, the will too of such as are holy cannot but act accordingly: For the will always following the ultimate dictates of the practical understanding, if that be so sound as to present God as the chiefest good, the will cannot but embrace and chuse him under the same notion. And herein indeed it is that the true nature of holiness doth especially consist, even in chusing and preferring God before all things in the world besides, *Lam.* iii. 24. *Psal.* cxix. 57. Thus it is with every one that is holy; his will is so inclined to the living God, that he accounts him his only stay and strength, his only comfort and support, his only wealth and riches, his only portion and inheritance that he either hath or is capable of: this argues a man's mind to be in a right frame, when his will thus performeth the office it was made for.

3. THE will being thus rectify'd, the several motions of it, which we call affections, cannot but move in a right line to this the center of all perfections, which they always do in them that are holy. For,

1. If you be holy, your love will be placed only upon God, or be sure upon him before all things else, so as to love nothing above him, nothing before him, nothing besides him, nothing in comparison of him. This is that you are all commanded to do, *Deut.* vi. 5. *Matth.* xxii. 37. *Luke* xiv. 26. And therefore so long as you love riches,

riches, honours, pleasures, or any thing in comparison of God, you may pretend what you please, but you are not holy persons, for you have *no true love for God*, 1 John ii. 15. For he that loves God must needs love him as God, that is, as the chiefest good, and by consequence, with all his heart, which no man can do that spends his affections upon the toys and trifles of this lower world. And therefore, so long as your affections are entangled among the briars and thorns, the cares and troubles of this lower world, you may conclude your minds are much distempered, and your souls utterly void and destitute of all true holiness.

2. THIS sacred fire of divine love burning upon the altar of a holy heart, cannot but flame out into very ardent desires after him whom the soul loves: Inasmuch that a soul that is truly holy, is always panting and breathing after God, crying out with *David*, Psal. lxxiii. 25. Psal. xlii. 1, 2. And indeed, I know nothing that more clearly argues a soul to be unholy and out of tune, than when it hankers after the low and impertinent trash of this transient world, more than after him that made and governs all things, and who hath made our souls too of that temper, that their desires can never be satisfied with any thing but him; and therefore he hath made nothing to make our souls happy, intending himself and his own perfections for the only object of happiness. And therefore it is in vain for us to desire any thing besides him, seeing nothing but himself can satisfy our desires. But this profane and wicked men will never be persuaded of, which also is an undeniable argument of their profaneness and impiety; for it shews their minds and affections to be strangely disordered, which they never are in those who are truly holy.

3. THE desires of a real saint being thus continually carried towards God, he cannot but rejoice in the enjoyment of his presence, the apprehensions of his favour, and in every thing that any ways relates unto him; for our joy is always acted according to our love and desire. What we love and desire most, we cannot but take most pleasure and delight in; and he that is truly holy, loving, and desiring nothing in comparison of God, his affection of joy must needs be streamed into the same channel, so as *always to rejoice in the Lord*, Phil. iv. 4. Heb. iii. 17. This demonstrates a man to be of an excellent temper indeed, when he hath got that command over himself, and that mastery over the world, that he can still rejoice in the Lord both when he hath and when he hath not any thing else to rejoice in; for this argues a man's mind to be so strong and sound, and so firmly fixed upon God, that nothing is able to disturb or move it.

4. HENCE also it follows, that such a person makes God his only stay and confidence, *trusting on him*, as well as rejoicing in him, *with all his heart*, Prov. iii. 5. Yea, whatsoever happens, such a one will never let go his hold, but still keep fast to him, as knowing him to be both willing and able to deliver and protect him, and hath promised *never to leave him nor forsake him*, Heb. xiii. 5. Hence it is that he that is truly pious, as he looks not for any good from this world, so neither doth he fear any evil that may happen in it; whatsoever storms and tempests arise without him, his hope is still anchored upon the rock of ages; which makes him always to have peace and tranquillity within, *Isa. xxvi. 3, 4*. Oh! what an excellent temper is every saint then of! What a happy condition is he in, when nothing in the world is able to molest or affright him, but in the various changes of this unconstant world, his heart is always fixed, trusting upon God!

5. I SHALL instance only in one more passion, and that is fear, which tho it be ordinarily opposed to trusting, yet in those who are truly pious, it is so rarely tempered, that as they trust in nothing but God, so neither do they fear any thing in the world but him. They trust in none but him, because they know that none but he can do them good; and they fear none but him, because they know that none but he can bring any evil upon them. This therefore makes them so much to desire his favour, and to dread nothing in the world but his displeasure, so as *to make him their only fear and their only dread*, *Isa. viii. 13*. And whosoever is thus possessed with the true fear of God, he cannot but express it both by a seemly reverence in his presence, and likewise by an universal obedience to all his precepts. And hence it comes to pass, that they who are truly holy, as they do not, so they dare not do any thing which God hath forbidden, nor yet leave any thing undone which he hath been pleased to command, as knowing that by this means they would offend and displease him.

THUS now you see what it is to be holy indeed, even to have all the faculties of your souls, your understanding, will, and affections all reduced to such an excellent

temper and disposition, as to be inclined to God, and meet together in him as their proper center. And if your souls be once made thus sound and whole, your bodies will be soon brought into subjection; so that your outward actions will be as good as your inward disposition is, and your behaviour towards men as excellent in its kind as your carriage towards God; so that *you'll be holy*, as the apostle here saith, *in all manner of conversation*.

BUT before we come to that, we must in the next place consider in what sense you are here commanded *to be holy as God is holy*: For it is plain, that you are not only enjoined here to be of that excellent and divine temper wherein true holiness doth consist; but the very holiness of God himself is here propounded as a pattern and example for you to walk by. *As he who hath called you is holy*, not as he is omniscient, not as he is almighty, not as he is eternal, but, *As he is holy, so be ye holy*; that is, do you follow after, and practise the same kind of holiness which is in God, so far as you are capable of it. Now by the holiness of God, as I have shewn the scripture understands his supreme excellency, majesty, and super-eminency above all things, and by consequence above whatsoever you are able to attain to; therefore it cannot be expected, neither is it here commanded that you should be holy in the same degree as he is; but that your holiness should be of the same nature that his is of, consisting in the excellency of your temper and disposition as his doth; so as to be and live as like to him as possibly you can. Hence holiness in scripture is called the image of God, because by it we imitate and resemble him; yea, it is called *the divine nature* too, 2 Pet. i. 4. because his nature is not only holy, but holiness it self; and therefore, if we be truly holy as he is, we may well be said to partake of his divine nature.

AND verily, he that is truly holy must needs *be holy as God is holy*, so as to come as near him in all acts of holiness as his nature is capable of: For as God loves and rejoiceth in himself, so doth every one that is holy, love and rejoice in none but him, as we have seen already. But besides that, this command, *to be holy as God is*, implies that we ought to imitate him in all such acts of holiness wherein he hath manifested the excellency of his nature to us as far as our natures or faculties can possibly reach, *Ex. Gr.*

1. ONE great excellency we apprehend in God, is, that he is just and righteous, rendering to every one according to their deserts, without respect of persons. So ought we to be; we must *render to every one their due*, Rom. xiii. 7. You must not *defraud or over-reach each other*, 1 Thess. iv. 6. But still square all our actions according to our Saviour's rule, *Mat. vii. 12*. And whosoever doth not so, is not holy as God is holy; *for the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 17.

2. HE is a God infinitely gracious and merciful, as he is so infinitely just as to punish every sin that is committed, so is he so infinitely merciful too as to pardon every sinner that repenteth: And they that do not repent too, he still spares them, and doth not presently execute the rigor of his law upon them; but gives them time to consider, that they may at length repent and turn unto him. Neither is there any of his perfections that he hath more clearly unveiled to us than this, both with his own mouth proclaiming it to us, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7*. and by all his prophets and apostles in all ages, particularly *Psal. ciii. 7, 8, 9, 10*. Now as he is to you, if you would be like to him, you must be so to one another; not peevish and froward, not revengeful and malicious, but slow to anger, merciful and gracious unto all. Tho you every day transgress God's laws, and so incurr his displeasure, yet you see by experience he hath not yet revenged himself as he might do of you; but you are still in the land of the living, monuments of his infinite mercy and compassion towards you. And so ought you to be to all others, passing by all wrongs and injuries which you either do or think you do receive from others, so as not to suffer your minds to be disturbed, or your passions discomposed, by any thing that men can do, as knowing that in this respect you are to be like to God himself, *merciful as he is merciful, and perfect as he is perfect*, *Mat. v. 48. Luke vi. 36*.

3. THE great God, he is good and loving, kind and liberal unto all, yea, to his very enemies themselves. And so must you be too, if you would be like to him, as your Saviour himself hath taught you, *Mat. v. 44, 45*. And verily, if you be holy as God is holy, you cannot but be thus loving as he is loving unto all, so as to extend your love and charity to all that you converse with, who have any occasion for it; loving not only those of your acquaintance, kindred, party or religion in the world, but all mankind that you can any way manifest your love unto. This

is to be like God indeed : And whosoever comes short of this, hath not as yet the image and portraiture of God enstamped upon him. And therefore tell me not of your being holy, so long as you confine your love or charity to sects and factions, or to any particular persons in the world. Give me a man whose love can find no bounds, but that reacheth as high as to the eternal God, and as far as to all the creatures in the world that bear his image and likeness. Of such a one I would say as our Saviour did of *Nathanael*, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile* : Behold a real saint, a truly pious and holy person, one holy as God is holy. For this our Saviour himself maketh an infallible sign or character of his disciples, that is, of true saints : *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another*, John xiii. 35.

LASTLY, God is so holy as to be *holy*, not only in some, but *all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 17. Every thing he speaks, every thing he wills, every thing he doth is holy, and just, and good ; and so ought you to be holy too, not only in some, or many, or most of your actions, but as it is here expressed, *in all manner of conversation* ; of which hereafter.

IN the mean while, from what we have already discoursed upon this subject, you may observe what great mistakes there are in the world concerning holiness, and how fearfully they are deceived who fancy and boast themselves to be the saints of God, a holy people, merely upon the account of the separate congregations and new modes of church-government and discipline ; as if such things as these are, could be any argument of real sanctity. I bless God for it, I heartily wish they were all as holy as they pretend to be : But verily, whilst they place holiness in such things as these are, they must give me leave to say, that I fear they do not know as yet what true holiness is ; for it is certainly a thing quite of another, and of a much higher nature than they would make it ; consisting in nothing less than the right disposition of all the faculties of our souls, and in the due regulation of all our thoughts, words, and actions, both towards God and men. This is the holiness that I would have you to follow after, as that without which you can never see God. And therefore, let me advise you not to take up, or content your selves with any other holiness but this. Do not think your selves to be holy persons, because you profess the christian religion, because you come to church, hear sermons, pray now and then, or the like. For all this you may do, and yet be unholy here and unhappy for ever : For I tell you again, holiness doth not consist in any particular acts or duties ; but in the rectitude or right disposition of the whole man, so that it runs through and rectifies all the faculties of the soul and members of the body ; yea, all the thoughts and affections, all the words and actions of your whole life. This is true holiness indeed, and whatsoever else comes under that notion, is nothing but hypocrisy and deceit, wherewith millions have been cheated into eternal flames. And that you might not follow after them, I have endeavoured to explain unto you the true notion of holiness, which I therefore beg of you to labour after, so as to make it your design in this world to attain unto it.



S E R M O N XCV.

Christ's Life a Pattern of Holiness to Christians.

I P E T. i. 15.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of Conversation.

HAVING thus consider'd the pattern and the command of holiness, how God is said to be holy, and how we are commanded to *be holy as he is holy*; we are now come to the extent and latitude of this holiness, it is to be *in all manner of conversation*, and it is in this wherein our holiness is to resemble God's, as well as in the nature of it: For as God is *holy in all his works*, so are we too to be holy in all our works, *Psal. cxlv. 17.* or as it is here expressed, *in all manner of conversation.*

WHERE first, by conversation we are to understand the whole course of our life in this world, which is therefore call'd *ἀναστροφὴ*, *conversation*, because we are still conversant about something or other, winding and turning our selves, as the word signifies, first to one thing, then to another. As where the apostle saith, *only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ*, Phil. i. 27. that is, live and carry your selves in this world according to the precepts of the gospel, as becometh those who profess so excellent a religion as Christ hath established in the world; so here, where we are commanded to *be holy in our conversation*, the meaning is, that we should be holy, not only in some few acts, but in the whole course and tenor of our lives; so that holiness should be our main business, our principal care and study in this life. We must not be holy by fits only, or now and then, as occasion serves, or humour and interest lead us; but holiness must be our constant business, our daily employment, the way we always walk in. Oh! this is much to be considered; for many men can make a shift to carry themselves after a holy manner at some times, and upon some occasions: but that will not serve their turn; your conversations, your constant way of living and conversing in the world must be holy. Yea,

IN the next place, you must *be holy in all manner of conversation*, *ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ*, *in all conversation*; whithersoever you turn your selves, whatsoever you converse with, you are still to be holy: So that not to be holy in all things, is to be holy in nothing as you ought to be. Nothing less than all holiness will serve your turn, it must be holiness *in all manner of conversation.*

1. You must be all holy *subjective*, in respect of your selves: You must be all over holy: All the faculties of your souls must be holy, and so must all the members of your bodies be holy too: Your understandings should be holy, your judgments holy, your conscience holy, your wills holy, your memories holy, your affections all holy: You should have holy loves and holy hatreds, holy joys and holy griefs, holy hopes and holy fears, holy desires and holy detestations. Thus that soul that is holy at all, it is all holy; it is like that part of the temple that was called *sanctum sanctorum*, the holy of holies, where there was nothing but what was holy in an eminent and peculiar manner. And as the soul of a true saint is thus like

like the holy of holies, so is his body like the other parts of the temple, where all the instruments and utensils in their several kinds were sacred and holy. There was the holy oil, the holy perfume, the holy garments, every thing was holy; nothing unclean, nothing common or profane was to come thither. Thus it is with every true saint; his body is *the temple of God*, for *the Spirit of God dwelleth in him*, 1 Cor. iii. 16. And therefore all the members or instruments of it should be holy, the eyes holy, the ears holy, the tongue, the hands, the feet, and every thing else holy, all reduced to an holy temper, and employed always about holy designs and projects, devoted wholly and solely *to the honour and glory of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Hence the apostle prays the *Thessalonians might be sanctified wholly in spirit, and soul, and body*, 1 Thess. v. 23. Where by the spirit we are to understand, as the antient fathers did, the highest part of man, his reason and understanding; by the soul we are to understand the elective part, the will, which in scripture is frequently called the soul; by the body we are to understand the brutish or sensitive part; so that these three parts make up the *ὅλον ἄνθρωπον*, *the whole of a man*; and therefore the apostle desires that all three *might be sanctified*, that so the whole man might be made holy. From whence it is plain, that sanctification is of the whole man, not only of any part or parcel of it. If the whole be not holy the whole is sinful: If a man be not thoroughly sanctified so as to have all the powers of his soul restored to their proper temper and constitution, he can be holy in nothing, much less *in all manner of conversation*.

2. TRUE holiness is universal also in respect of the object: *it hath respect unto all the commands of God*, Psal. cxix. 6. It equally respecteth the commands of both tables, and every command that is in either of them, in exercising whatsoever graces, performing whatsoever duties we owe either to God or man. This is *to be holy in all manner of conversation* indeed, when we carry our selves after an holy and godly manner towards all persons whatsoever that we converse with, as the apostle did, Acts xxiv. 16.

1st, HE that is truly pious hath be sure a great care to pay homage and worship which he oweth to Almighty God, not only loving of him, longing for him, rejoicing in him, trusting on him, and fearing him above all things in the world besides, as I have shewn already; but likewise performing all such external worship which is due unto him, with that reverence and devotion as becometh so great a work as that is. For he that is not holy in his conversation towards God, be sure can never be holy in his conversation towards men. But in performing our duties unto Almighty God, we do in our capacity converse with himself, and therefore ought to have a special regard to our outward as well as inward deportment before him. As our thoughts are all the while to be fixed upon him, and our affections moved suitably unto him, so are our outward gestures also to be seemly and reverent towards him, such as may testify our acknowledgment of his supreme authority over us, and our constant dependence upon him. Hence Solomon commands, Eccles. v. 1. *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God*; where the part is put for the whole, the feet for all the body. And if we must take care of our very feet, the lowest part of our body, much more of our hands and eyes, and heads, and all other members of our body, to see that they deport themselves so as to express and manifest our fear and dread of him, before whom we are.

THUS Moses was commanded *to uncover his feet when he drew near to God*, Exod. iii. 5. and so was Joshua, Josh. v. 15. Whence discalceation or uncovering the feet was always used as an expression of reverence to God in the *Eastern* churches, especially among the *Jews*; as uncovering the head is still among us. And whosoever dare presume to offer up his prayers, or to perform any religious duty to the most high God in an unseemly or irreverent manner, he thereby manifesteth himself to be an unholy and profane person, one that hath not any true sense of God's power and majesty upon his heart; for if he had, he could not but abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes, and so carry himself with all humility and reverence imaginable before him: As indeed we are all commanded to do, Levit. x. 3. For to sanctify the Lord is nothing else but to agnize and express our acknowledgment of his sanctity or holiness, that is, of his supreme excellency, power and super-eminency over us and all the world. But how can we possibly do this if we behave our selves no otherwise in his presence than as if he was our fellow-creature? Is this to worship him? Is this to celebrate his praise and glory? Is this to sanctify him when we draw nigh unto him? How can that man be said to sanctify the Lord of hosts in

praying to him, who dares at the same time to sit as confidently before him, and talk as malapertly to him as if he was but his fellow worm? How can that man be said to sanctify the Lord of hosts, in hearing of his word, who at the same time thinks scorn to veil his bonnet, or uncover his head before him? How can that man be said to sanctify the Lord of hosts, in receiving the blessed body and blood of his only Son, who at the same time will not vouchsafe him so much as his knee in honour of so great a mercy as this is? Is this to sanctify the Lord of hosts? Or rather, what is, if this be not to confront his Majesty, to profane his ordinances, to villify his word, to despise his presence, and to disparage the greatest of his mercies as nothing worth? And yet, how many have we among us, who would therefore be accounted more holy than others, because they are so unholy themselves as to express no reverence or solemnity at all in the holy presence of the most holy God? But as for you, if ever you desire to manifest your selves to be holy indeed, whensoever you converse with the most high God in his sacred ordinances, you must be sure to behave your selves with that shamefacedness and modesty, with that reverence and humility, as becometh those who believe themselves to be in the special presence of the supreme Being of the world. For otherwise, whatsoever pretences you make to holiness, you may be confident you are not holy, as you are here commanded to be, *in all manner of conversation*: For you are not holy in your conversation towards God. And if you be not holy in this, be sure you are holy in nothing. And therefore, above all things you must have an especial care of this, even to perform your devoirs to the most high God after an holy and solemn manner.

2dly, Your holiness must also shew forth it self in your conversation towards men. For altho all holiness be referred immediately unto God as its proper and adequate object, yet seeing our conversation towards men is to be regulated by the laws of God, and grounded upon obedience to him, that also both may and ought to be holy: So that your just and righteous actions towards men, ought likewise to be holy and pious actions towards God; as being sincerely performed out of love to his person, and obedience to his precepts. And verily, holiness being the rectitude or right disposition of the whole man, wheresoever it is, it cannot but exert and put forth it self in all the actions of a man's life, conforming all and every one of them to the laws and commands of God. Where by actions I mean whatsoever a man doth wherein his neighbour is concerned, inwardly in his thoughts and affections, or outwardly in his words and actions, properly so called, towards him. For he that would be truly holy, must make conscience of ordering every one of them according to the rules laid down in the holy scriptures.

1. As for the thoughts: Altho they fall not under the cognizance of men, unless they break forth into words or actions, yet he that is truly holy hath an especial care of them, to keep them also within their proper bounds and limits; so that as he never thinks too highly of himself, so neither doth he think too lowly of his neighbours; he knowing himself better than others, and being thoroughly acquainted with his own failures and imperfections, cannot but look upon himself as worse than all others, *1 Tim. i. 15.* and by consequence think all others better than himself, *Phil. ii. 3.* And therefore he dares not judge or censure any man living but himself, as being always mindful of his Saviour's words, *Mat. vii. 1, 2, 3, 4.* This is the proper effect of holiness wheresoever it comes; thus to keep a man humble in his own eyes, and to make him think well of all men, ill of none; yea, tho he sees a man fall before his eyes, yet he doth not think him worse than himself, as still knowing more ill by himself than he doth by him.

2. His thoughts running thus regularly concerning his neighbour, his affections cannot but move accordingly. And therefore thinking well of all men, he cannot but love and honour all men, *1 Pet. ii. 17.* yea, even his very enemies, *Matt. v. 44.* Tho they be enemies unto him, he dares not be so to them; so that whatsoever evil he receiveth from them, he still endeavours to do them all the good he can, according to the command that is laid upon him, *Rom. xii. 20, 21.* This is a true saint indeed; when a man's affections are kept in that excellent order and discipline, that affronts and injuries themselves are not able to trouble or discompose them, but whatsoever others do or speak against him, his love is still the same, his affections are unchangeable towards them. This is that which true holiness requires and acts, wheresoever it is. And therefore wheresoever you see envy or malice, feuds or animosities, strife or contention allowed and practised, you may conclude there is no such thing as holiness there; for that is always accompanied with love

and amity, with peace and concord, and with all other virtues whatsoever that spring from the right disposition of mens affections, wherein true holiness doth principally consist; and therefore it can never be separated from a meek and quiet, a loving and peaceable spirit, *Heb. xii. 14.*

3. THE thoughts and affections of a truly pious man towards others being thus rarely tempered, his words cannot but be framed suitably unto them: For *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, *Matth. xii. 34.* That is, as a man's heart is, so will his words be. If a man thinks no ill of his neighbour, he will much less speak ill of him; nay he cannot do it, for if he should his tongue would contradict his heart, he would speak what he doth not think; which be sure no man that is truly holy ever doth. And besides that, to speak evil of any man is expressly contrary to the command of God, *Tit. iii. 2.* And therefore holiness disposing and modelling the whole man according to the word of God; if he that is holy should speak ill of any man, he would act contrary to his temper and disposition. Hence therefore, if you would manifest your selves to be saints indeed, as you must not lye, nor swear, nor curse, nor blaspheme God, nor deride religion, and the like; so neither must you slander or backbite your neighbour, but as you ought to speak of other mens virtues only behind their backs, so must you speak of their vices only before their faces; and that too, not with rancour, malice or passion, but with the spirit of meekness and sobriety, that the calmness and gravity of your words may shew forth the excellent disposition which holiness hath reduced your hearts into.

4. As holiness thus refines a man's thoughts, regulates his affections, and bridles his tongue, so doth it likewise rectify all his actions, as to those he converseth with; so that he cannot, he dare not but fulfil all the relations, discharge all the trusts, and perform all the duties that he stands any ways obliged to do: Whatsoever company he is in, whatsoever employment he is about, whatsoever he doth or doth not, he hath still a care of the main chance, even to keep his conscience void of offence both towards God and men. For holiness, wheresoever it is, as it is always sincere, so it is universal too. It admits of no ifs and ands, no buts and exceptions, but carries a man with an even and steady course through his whole duty. It will not suffer a man to swear any more than to lye; nor yet to lye any more than to swear. It makes a man as afraid to cheat privately in his shop, as he is to rob publickly in the roads; and as cautious to wrong none, as he is desirous none should wrong him. He dares no more deal unjustly or fraudulently with his neighbour, than he dares to neglect his daily prayers and praises unto God. Infomuch that, as *Zachariah* prophesied, that in the latter days after the coming of Christ, *there should be holiness to the Lord written upon the very bells of the horses*, *Zach. xiv. 20.* so is it with every true saint, *holiness to the Lord* may be written upon all his actions; yea, upon every thing he thinks or speaks, or doth. And verily it is such an universal holiness as this is, that will stand you in stead another day; you had as good be holy in nothing as not in all things. A partial holiness never yet did, nor ever will do any man good; but it hath occasioned the ruin and destruction of thousands, who being more nice and scrupulous in some things than their neighbours are, have therefore thought themselves to be truly holy. But this is a great and dangerous mistake; which I desire you in an especial manner to beware that you be not overtaken with it. Never think your selves to be holy at all, unless you be holy in all manner of conversation, holy in your thoughts, holy in your affections, holy in your words, and holy in all your actions, both to God and men. Neither must you think that you may be holy at one time and not at another. No, he that is ever holy is holy ever, in all places, upon all occasions, at all times and seasons, all his life long, *Luke i. 74, 75.* For holiness is an universal principle that runs through the whole course of a man's life; yea, and wheresoever it is once sown it always comes up, grows higher and higher, and still brings forth more and more fruit, so that it still adds one grace to another, *2 Pet. i. 5, 6.* yea, and it is always adding too one degree of grace to another, until at length every spark of grace be blown up into a flame of glory: Infomuch that they who are truly holy, never think themselves to be holy enough; but the more holy they are, the more holy they desire to be, still aspiring higher and higher, till at length they commence perfect and glorify'd saints in heaven.

BUT then you may say, if this be the nature of true holiness, who then can be holy? or how is it possible for us to attain to such an excellent spirit as to be thus
holy

holy in all manner of conversation? To which I answer; First, It is true indeed, that it is a very hard and difficult matter to be truly holy, whatsoever the great pretenders to it may fancy or boast. For questionless, as holiness is the highest excellency that we can ever attain unto; so is it the hardest matter in the world to attain unto it. However, in the second place, I answer, that how hard soever it be, yet it is possible for any or every one of us to be holy. For as our Saviour said in the like case, *Matth. xix. 23, 24, 25, 26.* so say I; though it be impossible for men ever to make themselves holy; yet with God all things are possible, and by consequence this too. There is no mind so dark, but he can illuminate it: No heart so hard but he can soften it: No will so crooked, but he can straiten it: no affection so disorderly, but he can regulate it: No soul so foul, but he can cleanse it: No man so great a sinner, but he is able to make him as great a saint.

NEITHER is he less willing than able to do it for us, if we will but make use of the means which himself hath prescribed in order thereunto: So that if any of you be not as holy as I have shewn you ought to be, it is most certainly your own faults; neither can you blame any one but your selves for it.

BUT I hope that what you have heard already concerning the excellency of holiness, hath wrought so far upon you, that you are now really desirous to be holy indeed, and long to know how you may come to be so. And to satisfy your desires, I shall endeavour to acquaint you with the ready way to do it. But you must give me leave to tell you, that I fear there are but few among you that will mind it; and that my pains will be in vain to many of you. For I know your hearts are generally so much taken up with the affairs of this life, that you will hardly be persuaded to observe these rules exactly which I shall shew you to be necessary in order to your being holy. However, it will be worth my while to declare them to you, if but any one of you should be prevailed upon to observe them. And who knows but that whilst I am speaking to your ears, the great God himself may speak so effectually to your hearts, that many of you may at this time be converted from sin to holiness, and from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, so as for the future to become real and true saints? Or howsoever, whether you hear, or whether you forbear, I must do my duty, and leave the issue unto God.

First THEREFORE, if you would be holy indeed, you must resolve beforehand to make it your great care and principal business in this world to endeavour after it. You must not think that it is so easy a matter to be holy that you need not much concern your selves, nor take any great pains about it. For I verily believe one of the principal reasons why there are so few holy persons in the world, is, because most persons think it is so easy a matter to be holy, that if they do but read good books, and come to church now and then, they cannot miss of it. But do not mistake your selves: For I dare assure you, that if ever any of you shall be made holy, as I hope many of you will, you'll find there is a great deal of care and pains to be taken before you can arrive at so high and excellent a disposition as that is; you must not only seek it, but you must seek it in the first place, or else you are not likely to find it, *Matth. vi. 33.* Holiness is the strait gate which you must strive to enter at, *Luke xiii. 24.* And therefore, if you really desire to be holy, you must set your selves in good earnest upon the prosecution of it, before all things in the world besides, still projecting and contriving how to get your lusts rooted up, and true grace and piety planted in your souls. You must not make it only your business by the bye, but your only business; or else you'll never be able to effect it. And let me tell you this for your comfort and encouragement, that although none ever yet did, or ever can attain to holiness, that sought it only after a careless, indifferent and perfunctory manner; so none that sincerely seek and endeavour after it before all things else, ever did, or ever can fail of attaining to it. And whatsoever pains it costs you, it cannot but be worth your while, as knowing that holiness is not only the highest, but the only excellency that your souls are capable of; and therefore no care, no pains, no cost, can be too much in order to it. Well then: If you cordially desire as you pretend, to be holy, as you are here commanded, in all manner of conversation, let this be the first step you take in order to it. Halt no longer between two opinions: But resolve fully and stedfastly with your selves, by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, that from this day forward you will make holiness your only aim and design in this world; and by consequence, that you will leave no stone unturn'd

unturn'd, but use all means imaginable that may any ways conduce to your being and living holy. Do this, and your work will be half done.

2. YOUR mind being thus inflamed with the desire of holiness, and armed with resolutions to pursue it, as humble supplicants, in a reverend and solemn manner betake your selves to Almighty God, the only fountain of all true grace and virtue, implore his mercy, and beseech him for his Son's sake to enstamp his image once more upon you, and to make you holy as he is holy. Say with *David*, *Psal. ii. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10.* And with *Ephraim* in the prophet, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God*, *Jer. xxxi. 18. ch. xvii. 14.* Let this be your daily, your constant prayer, uttered not only with your mouths, but from the very bottom of your hearts, earnestly desiring nothing in the world so much as this. This is the way; and the only way that the apostle directs us to for the getting of wisdom, or true piety, *Jam. i. 5.* But for the better understanding of this, consider,

1. NONE but God can make you holy; it is not in your own strength and power to do it. When man stood, it was in his power to throw himself down; but now he is down, it is not in his power to raise himself up again. He that was holy could make himself sinful; but we that are sinful cannot make our selves holy. And therefore, never expect to be made holy by your selves, by the strength of your reason, or the feigned power of your own will. For I know *that the way of man is not in himself: It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, *Jer. x. 23.* You can and ought to use all means that conduce to your being holy; but it is God alone that can make them effectual. For every good thing comes from him, *Jam. i. 17.* And that faith whereby we are saved from our sins, and made truly pious, is expressly said *to be the gift of God*, *Eph. ii. 8.* It is God's gift; and therefore we can neither work it in our selves, nor yet do any thing whereby to merit it from him: But when we have done all we can, we must acknowledge it to come only from his free grace and mercy; for it is his gift. And it is well it is so: For, for mine own part, had I nothing else to trust to but my own powers and faculties, I should despair of ever being so happy as to be truly holy. But our comfort is, that what is wanting in our selves, Omnipotence it self is ready to supply us with it.

2. As none but God can make us holy, so we can never expect that he should do it for us, unless we beg it of him. For all the promises that he hath made us to this purpose have this proviso or condition annexed to them, that we still pray to him for what he hath promised to us, *Ezek. xxxvi. 37.*

3. BUT if we earnestly desire, and sincerely pray for true grace and holiness we may be confident that he will bestow it upon us. For we have his express word for it, *Matth. vii. 7. ch. xxi. 22. John xv. 24.* But you must remember this caution, that it is not praying only now and then will do the business; but you must continue instant in prayers, as *St. Paul* did, *2 Cor. xii. 8.* and as our Saviour himself teacheth us to do, *Luke xviii. 1, 2.* And questionless, we may lay this down as an undoubted truth, that never any yet did, nor ever shall fail of being made really and truly holy that made it his constant business sincerely to pray to Almighty God, that he might be made so; and therefore, as ever you desire holiness, never leave off praying for it.

3. IN order to your being holy, it is necessary also that you often read and hear the word of God both read and preached: For *Faith comes by hearing*, *Rom. x. 17.* where under faith all true graces whatsoever are comprehended, which God doth ordinarily infuse into us by the ministry of the word. And therefore, although we both may and ought to beg this unspeakable mercy from him, even to be made holy, yet we must not expect that he should come down and give it us as it were with his own hands; but we must wait upon him for it in his publick ordinances, there expecting his holy Spirit to accompany his word into our hearts, and by it reduce them into their proper frame and constitution again, so as to make us like it self, holy.

4. HAVING made this progress in the way to holiness, stay not here, but still go on to exercise your selves continually in divine and heavenly meditations. Accustom your selves frequently to abstract and draw off your thoughts from the world, and all things here below; and to raise them up to God, and those glories that are above, so as often to be contemplating upon the vanity of the world, the sinfulness of sin, the perfections of God, the excellency of religion, the merits of Christ, the beauty of holiness, and the transcendency of that happiness which attends

it in the world to come. For such contemplations as these are, will very much conduce to the refining your thoughts, the reforming your judgments, and so to the reducing your affections into their proper order again, and so to the making of you sincerely holy. By this means it was that St. Paul became so eminent a saint, because *his conversation was always in heaven*, Phil. iii. 20. This is the way to be *holy in all manner of conversation* upon earth, even by *having our conversations always in heaven*.

5. THE last and principal thing of all to be done, in order to your being holy, is to believe in Jesus Christ; where, by being in Christ I mean, trusting or confiding in his merits and mediation, for two things especially.

1. FOR such influences of God's grace and Spirit, as may make us holy according to his promises: For it is certain, that none can make us holy but God; and it is certain that we have no ground to expect that he should do it for us, but his own promise; and it is as certain still, that *all his promises* are made and confirmed to us only in the blood of Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. Here therefore is the great duty that is incumbent upon all that desire to be holy, even to trust in the merits of Christ for God's performance of his promises to us, such especially wherein he hath promised to make us holy, such as Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Jer. xxxi. 33. These and such like are the promises of the new covenant sealed to us in the blood of Christ. And that which is required on our parts, is firmly to believe that God for Christ's sake will perform those his gracious promises to us; that he will be as good as his word, and crown our sincere endeavours after holiness with that success, that we shall be made really and sincerely holy. And when we earnestly desire, and sincerely pray for grace and holiness, we are stedfastly to believe that God for Christ's sake will hear and answer us; for that he will do, so Christ himself hath told us, and we are bound to believe him, John xvi. 23. And that it is not only lawful but necessary for us, thus to believe that for Christ's sake we *shall receive what we pray for*; Christ himself hath likewise assur'd us, Mark xi. 14. which is principally to be understood of the prayers which we make for the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, in order to the making us holy; which whosoever sincerely prays for, and at the same time truly believes that his request for Christ's sake shall be granted to him, he cannot miss of, for Christ hath said *he shall receive it*. And therefore, as you hope and believe in Christ, for the pardon of your sins and the justification of your persons, so you must trust and depend upon him likewise for the subduing of your lusts, and the sanctification of your natures; that is, for the making of you really and sincerely holy.

2. THE other thing which you are to trust in Christ for, is the acceptance of your sincere instead of perfect holiness: for the command is here expressed, *to be holy as God is holy, in all manner of conversation*; but this you can never perfectly be, so long as you are in this world: but after your highest attainments there will be still something of irregularity and disorder in you, both in your nature, and also in your actions. However, in the use of the means which we already discoursed of, none of you, but even in this life, by the assistance of God's grace, may reach so far as to be sincerely holy; that is, to have all the faculties of your souls reduced, though not into a perfect, yet into a very good order and excellent disposition, so as to carry your selves for the main very well and regularly both towards God and man, all the days of your life, neither wilfully committing any sin, nor neglecting any duty which is required of you, but still endeavouring to the utmost of your knowledge and power to perform universal and constant obedience to all the commands of God. And this you are bound to believe, that God for Christ's sake will accept of, in lieu of that perfect holiness which is required of you: For this is that the scripture doth plainly assert, Eph. i. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 5. And indeed, this is the great privilege that is offer'd to us in the gospel-covenant, or the covenant of grace, that God will now accept of our sincere, instead of perfect holiness, by reason of that absolutely perfect obedience which Christ hath perform'd in our steads, or however by the virtue of his merit and mediation for us: By which means, whosoever among you shall perform sincere obedience to Almighty God to the utmost of your power, it shall be as acceptable to him in Jesus Christ, as the very praises and services of the holy angels and glorified saints in heaven are. And therefore, although in this life you cannot be so perfectly holy as they are, yet you may be so *holy in all manner of conversation*, that God will accept of you as well as if ye were holy in all manner of perfection; though not for any intrinsic

virtue

virtue or value in your selves or works, yet by reason of Christ's merits and righteousness imputed to you, and to all those that truly believe in him: For this is that unspeakable benefit which we receive by Christ, that he helps our weaknesses by his own Almighty Spirit implanted in us, and supplies our defects by his all-sufficient merit imputed to us.

Thus now you see how you may all become holy, *holy as God is, in all manner of conversation*. I intended in the next place to have presented you with some considerations which might have excited and stirr'd you up to the use of the said means, and to the serious prosecution of the holiness we have now been speaking of; but I hope that labour may be now spared: For now you know how to become holy; how to have your headstrong corruptions bridled, and your unruly passions tamed; how to have your understandings clear'd, and your judgments rectified; how to have your consciences cleansed, and your thoughts refined; how to have your wills sanctified, your affections regulated, and your whole souls reduced into an angelick, yea a divine frame and constitution, so as to be like, not only to the best of creatures, but to your most holy Creator himself. Now, I say, you know this, methinks you should not need any other arguments to move you to put it into execution; but should be more ready to labour after holiness than I can be to persuade you to it. Howsoever, you shall give me leave to mind you only of two things, which I hope, if seriously weigh'd, will do the work.

1. CONSIDER, There is no other way imaginable for you to be happy either in this life or that which is to come, but by being holy. Though God blessed you with large estates, with great natural parts, and with a confluence of all earthly enjoyments, what will all these things signify when you go into the other world, and leave them behind you for others to be cheated and ensnared by them as your selves have been? What advantage will you then receive from all those things which you here take so much care and pains about? Surely none at all; nothing but holiness will then stand you in any stead, without which you neither shall nor can see God; for you will not be qualified for the contemplation and enjoyment of his divine perfections, unless you be first made *holy as he is holy*. Do not therefore fool and deceive your selves with groundless and vain conceits of heaven; for I dare assure you, you'll never come there, unless you be first made holy, and sanctified throughout.

2. CONSIDER, As there is none can be happy but he that is first holy, so none can be holy but he shall be happy too; this, many thousands have experienced already, who once were upon earth as we now are, but now they are glorified saints in heaven. But how came they thither but by being saints upon earth first? They were first holy, and so they became happy; and this is the way that you must take if ever you desire to go to them. Let me therefore beseech you to dally no longer in a matter of such importance as this is; but set your selves in good earnest upon the use of all those means whereby you may become *holy as God is holy*; which if ye would all do, how happy would you be? How certainly would you then become all glorified saints in heaven, and be as really happy in all manner of perfection hereafter, as you are *holy here in all manner of conversation*?



S E R M O N XCVI.

The Holiness of Christians ought to be eminent.

MATT. V. 20.

For I say unto you, That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

WHATSOEVER other things we may differ in, I am sure there is one thing wherein we all agree, and that is, we all desire to be happy: We would all be preserved or freed from all grief and trouble, from all care and fear, from whatsoever can either discompose our minds, or disturb our rest and quiet: Yea, we all desire to have our desires compleatly satisfied, which seeing we cannot have whilst we are upon earth, hence we all desire to go to heaven, the place fitted and appointed to make men happy. And therefore I am willing to persuade my self that the next to your performing your homage and devotions to Almighty God, the great end of your coming hither this day, is, to learn how to get heaven, that so you may live and be happy for ever. But let me tell you, it is no easy matter to come thither; for *the way is strait, and the gate narrow, that leadeth unto everlasting life, and there be but few that find it.* But give me leave to acquaint you withal, to your unspeakable comfort, that tho' it be difficult, it is not impossible for every soul here present to be advanced to eternal glory; and it will be your own faults if you miss of it; which that you may not do, I shall endeavour to do my duty in directing you in the way to heaven, shewing you by what means you may all e'er long partake of the greatest happiness that it is possible for your natures to be capable of.

Now for this end, I must first mind you of that which I suppose you all know and believe already, even that it is only by Jesus Christ that you can be saved; and that he is able to save to the utmost all those that come unto God by him: For this is the fundamental article of that religion which you all profess; and he deserves not the name of a Christian that doth not believe it. And altho I dare not assert, that it is indispensably necessary for every one thoroughly to understand the mysterious way and method of man's salvation by Jesus Christ, yet this is a certain and undoubted truth, that none can, that doth not believe he may be saved by him: And therefore it highly concerns us all to believe that Jesus Christ, the only Son of the living God, is the only Saviour of mankind: That he came from heaven to earth on purpose to make way for us to go from earth to heaven: That all his sufferings were only upon our account; and that he by them hath made such a satisfaction to God's justice for man's sins, that all that truly repent and believe the Gospel, may be pardoned and accepted of, in and through him who *was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,* 2 Cor. v. 21.

THIS being premised concerning the possibility of our salvation only by Jesus Christ, it follows in course, that if ever we desire to be saved, we must of necessity observe the rules which he hath prescribed in order thereunto: for seeing it is he alone that can bring us unto heaven, we must needs acknowledge, that he knew best what we must do that we may come thither: and seeing he came into the world on purpose to save us, it cannot be imagined that he should impose any thing upon us, but what is absolutely necessary for our salvation; and therefore it behoves us very much frequently to consult the gospels, and consider seriously with our selves, what he there saith we must or must not do in order to our being saved. And we are to look upon all his sayings as so many oracles of God, not only because he was sent from God to speak them, but because he himself too who spake them, was really and truly God; so that every thing that he spake was therefore the word of God because he spake it: And therefore we must not think that so much as an idle or impertinent expression ever fell from him whilst he was upon earth; but every thing that he said was of extraordinary weight, of absolute necessity to be known, observed, believed and practised, by all those who would be saved from their sin and misery by his merit and mediation. And hence it was, that God of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, was pleased so to order it, that the divine sentences which proceeded from our Saviour's mouth should be left upon record for all future ages, not only by the testimony of them which were ear-witnesses of them, but by the infallible assistance of the holy Ghost himself, inspiring of them; by which means we are, or may be, as certain of what he said, as if we had heard it with our own ears; and every thing that we read that he said, ought to have the same impressions upon us, when we read or hear it read, as if we had been just by him when he spake it, and had heard the words proceeding out of his sacred and divine mouth; that so we may receive the same benefit from every thing he spake, as they did or ought to have done that heard it. And it is our unspeakable happiness, that tho not every particular expression, yet the sum and substance of whatsoever he said is so faithfully transmitted to us, that we may all be thoroughly instructed in his whole will and pleasure, and easily understand what he would have us do in order to our partaking of the merits of his death and passions.

I HAVE insisted the longer upon this discourse concerning the heavenly and divine sayings of our blessed Saviour in general, that you might be the better prepared to understand the words which I have now read unto you, and receive what I shall suggest unto you from them, with that due attention and affection, as becometh those who believe them to be the words of their only Saviour and Redeemer, and part of that divine sermon which he preached upon the mount; wherein there is never an expression or word, but what deserves to be seriously considered and weighed by us; the scope of the whole sermon in general being to acquaint us with what is necessary for us to do, if we desire to go to heaven: For which end he tells us in express terms, *ver. 17. That he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them*; that is, that notwithstanding he came with an intention to offer up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and for the transgression of the moral law, yet he would not have them think that he came to abrogate and disannul that law, but rather to establish and confirm it; not to take off our obligations to it, but to make them stronger than they were before: And therefore he tells them that the moral law is and shall be of perpetual force and virtue; so that not the least jot or tittle should ever perish, so as to be made void and of none effect, *ver. 18. but the breakers of this law shall always have condign punishment laid upon them*; and they that keep it, shall be graciously rewarded with eternal life, *ver. 19.* And then he adds, *For I say unto you, &c.* As if he should have said, Do not think ever to come to heaven, without performing sincere obedience to all the moral law; for whatsoever others may think or teach, I the Son of God *say unto you*, I that am come into the world on purpose to save you, I assure you, that for the great pretences which the *Scribes and Pharisees* make to righteousness, *unless your righteousness exceed theirs, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

IN speaking to which words, that you may clearly understand the full meaning and intent of our blessed Saviour in them, I shall shew,

- I. WHAT righteousness in general is to be understood here.
- II. WHAT was the righteousness of the *Scribes and Pharisees*.

III. WHEREIN ours should exceed theirs.

IV. That *unless our righteousness doth exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

As for the *First*, What that righteousness in general is which our Saviour here speaks of; we must know that he is here treating of the moral law, and of that obedience which we ought to perform unto it. And therefore the righteousness which he here speaks of cannot be understood of that evangelical righteousness which we have in him; that which the apostle calls *the righteousness of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9. but of that righteousness which the moral law commands and requires of us: In which sense although we commonly use the word righteousness only to denote just and equitable dealings between man and man, yet, in scripture, righteousness is a general term, whereby the holy Ghost is pleased to express our whole duty both to God and man: So that every particular act which we are bound to do by the law of God, is but a branch or part of righteousness. And if we take the words in their fullest latitude, the very definition which civilians give of justice or righteousness will bear this sense: They say, *Iustitia est constans & perpetua voluntas jus suum cuique tribuendi*; justice is a constant and perpetual will to give to every one their due. I know they restrain it only unto men; but it may in the same sense be referred to God too: For whatsoever he commands us to perform immediately to himself, is really his due from us; we owe it him, and unless we perform it, we wrong him, and detain from him that which he had an eternal right to and propriety in.

As for example, God hath commanded us to love and honour him, to fear and reverence, to praise and worship him: All which are but as so many acts of that homage which we owe him for his creation and preservation of us. And whosoever refuseth or neglects to pay them, he is therein unjust to God; he doth not give him his due: But as the prophet saith, that the people *robbed God in tithes and offerings*, because they kept them back from him, and did not bring them to his priests and levites, Mal. iii. 8. so may we be properly said to rob him too, by withholding our affections from him, by not giving him that honour and respect, that praise and worship, which is due unto his name: So that every act of impiety towards God, is a kind of sacrilege; and by consequence, the highest injustice imaginable, because it is committed against God himself.

AND then, as for the duties which we owe to one another; upon that very account because we owe them to one another, they cannot but all come under the proper notion of righteousness or justice: So that whatsoever we are bound to do, either to or for each other, that every man hath a right to; and whosoever doth not do it, is as really unjust as he is that takes away any thing from him. As for example, we are all obliged by the law of God and nature to relieve such as are poor and indigent; and therefore he that doth not do it, is not only uncharitable, but unrighteous: For he wrongs the poor, by withholding that from him which God hath given him a right to. For the poor hath as much right to your alms, as you have to your estates; alms being but as a rent-charge which God hath reserved for the poor out of the estates which he hath put into your hands. Hence the same word צדקה which in *Hebrew* signifies *righteousness*; in other oriental languages, especially *Syriack* and *Arabick*, it is commonly used for *alms*; and the *Hebrew* word it self is ordinarily translated by the LXX. ἐλεημοσύνη, *almsgiving*, or *charity*; and so it is plainly used, Dan. iv. 27. And thus I might instance in all other duties which we owe to our neighbours, which are therefore called duties because we owe them; and you'll all acknowledge him to be an unrighteous or unjust man, that doth not pay what he owes to all men. And therefore it is a great mistake to think that justice consists only in buying and selling, and paying the money which we owe to others, without defrauding or over-reaching them: For there are many other debts which we are obliged to pay to all men, as the apostle intimates, Rom. xiii. 7. And whosoever doth not perform his whole duty unto all men, in loving of them, in having a good opinion of them, in speaking well of them, in forgiving the injuries he receives from them, in being as helpful as he can in all things to them, and the like, is an unrighteous man, as well as he that cheateth or robs another of what he hath; for he really robs his neighbour of what he hath a just right to, and propriety in, by the laws of God himself.

AND

AND thus we see how righteousness in its general notion comprehends under it all manner of grace and virtue whatever: In which sense the word *δικαιοσύνη*, which we here translate *righteousness*, was antiently used by the heathens themselves: *Plato* observeth there are three parts of righteousness, in that it respects both God, men, and the dead, and so signifies whatsoever duties we owe to any of them. *Aristotle* also frequently useth it in the same sense, and quotes for it that antient verse made long before his days,

Ἐν τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ συλλήβδην πᾶς ἀρετὴ ἐστίν.

In justice or righteousness all virtue is contained.

AND in this sense 'tis that our Saviour himself useth this word in my text; as denoting that habit of the mind whereby we are willing and ready to perform our whole duty both to God and man, and to carry our selves towards both according to the moral law, so as to make that the rule and square of all our thoughts, words and actions whatsoever; and that is properly righteousness.

THE *Second* thing to be considered is, What was that righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* which our blessed Saviour here speaks of.

First, As for the righteousness of the *Scribes*. We must know that the *Scribes* were only an order or degree of men among the *Jews*, that gave themselves to the studying of the law, and so took upon them to write out, and to read the scriptures of the old testament publickly, in the temple and in the synagogues; and to interpret and expound them to the people, to resolve all dubious questions about the law, and to answer objections made against it; and to preserve the genealogies of every tribe, especially of the royal family, and to give the true sense and meaning of any doubtful place either in the law or the prophets. Thus *Shaphan* the *Scribe* is said to have read the law to King *Josiah*, 2 Kings xxii. 9, 10. And *Ezra* was a ready *Scribe* in the law of *Moses*, *Ezra* vii. 6, 10. In the new testament there is frequent mention made of them. It was them, together with the chief priests, whom *Herod* consulted to know where *Christ* should be born, *Mat.* ii. 4. They told the people that *Elias* must first come before the *Messiah*, *Mat.* xvii. 10. They sat together with the *Pharisees* in *Moses's* seat, *Mat.* xxiii. 10. And taught the people, *Mat.* vii. 21. So that it was by those that *Moses* was preached in every city, and read in the synagogues every sabbath-day, as the apostle speaketh, *Acts* xv. 21. Hence they being very conversant in the scriptures, they were still had in a great esteem by the people: Which that they might not only preserve but encrease, they were so cunning and subtle as still to be finding out new notions to please the people with; for which end, they were forced to lay aside the plain literal meaning of the scriptures, as a thing much below them to mind, and to invent spiritual and mystical senses for every place of scripture; which at length swelled to that number, that by reason of their new and cabbalistical interpretations, the word of God was so corrupted, and the true meaning of it so miserably perverted, that our Saviour himself tells them, *they had made it of none effect*, *Mat.* xv. 6. And herein it was that all the righteousness which they pretended to consisted, even in having the scripture at their tongues-end, and being able to bring it in upon all occasions; in understanding the high and mystical meaning of it, so as to be able to explain it unto others; in performing outward obedience to the law, not according to the true and literal, but the new and mystical sense, which themselves had put upon it; in frequenting the synagogues, and for a pretence making long prayers, *Mark* xii. 38, 39, 40. So that the *Scribes* were much like to those whom they call mystical divines in the popish religion, and to such among our selves as turn the scripture into allegories, and invent new notions and speculations in divinity, and so make a greater shew of piety, but neglect the power and substance of it.

THUS much of the *Scribes*. As for the *Pharisees*, we must know there were, in our Saviour's time, three principal sects among the *Jews*: The *Essenes*; the *Sadducees*; and the *Pharisees*. Whereof, the *Essenes* are never, the *Sadducees* seldom, the *Pharisees* very often mentioned in the new testament, and reprov'd by our Saviour: Not but that the others were as bad or worse than those; but because these were more numerous, and their errors were more specious and plausible than the others were: This being the strictest sect, in all the *Jewish* religion, as *St. Paul* himself, who was brought up in it, testifieth, *Acts* xxvi. 4, 5. And therefore they were called *Pharisees*, from the

the Hebrew word פָּרָשׁ *to separate*, because they separated themselves from other people, as being more pure and holy in their own esteem, than they; as we may see by the Pharisee's prayer, when he said, *I thank thee, O God, that I am not as other people*, Luke xviii. 11. So that the word *Pharisee* properly signifies a separatist, one that separateth himself from the society and fellowship of others upon the account of religion, as pretending greater purity and holiness than others do. Hence this name properly belongs not only to many among our selves, but likewise to very many in the popish religion, even to the monks and friars, yea and nuns too: For there were women *Pharisees* as well as men, as I could easily shew, was it necessary or pertinent to my purpose. Hence the Jews to this day commonly call monks in Hebrew, פְּרוּשִׁים *Pharisees*, and nuns פְּרוּשׁוֹת *she Pharisees*; yea, the very word *Monachus*, a monk, signifies much the same thing as *Pharisee* doth, even one that lives alone, separate from all commerce with other people. And the exposition which *R. D. Kimchi* gives of the word *Pharisee* plainly agrees with the temper of the monks, and their manner of life; for they were called *Pharisees*, saith he, because they made shew to the world, פְּרוּשִׁים וְאַנְשֵׁים צְדִיקִים *that they are singular and separate persons, and righteous men*. And if we compare the one with the other, we shall easily conclude that the *Pharisees* were just such persons in the Jewish, as the monks are in the Christian religion, and so that they may properly be termed *Pharisees*. For the *Pharisees* pretended to follow a double law, the one written, and the other unwritten; the one which they received from *Moses*, the other by tradition from their fore-fathers, as *Josephus*, a Jew, tells us: And how exactly the friars agree with them in this, you all know. Yea, the *Pharisees* preferred their traditions before the written law, *Mat. xv. 3.* as you all know the papists in general do at this time. The *Pharisees* had a different habit from other people, as the friars of the several orders now have. The *Pharisees* were very much noted for their running over a great many prayers each day, in the same manner as the papists do their *Ave-Mary's*, and *Pater-Noster's*. The *Pharisees* preferred their vows before the works of justice and charity, *Mat. xv. 4, 5.* wherein they are exactly imitated by the friars and nuns. Moreover, had the *Pharisees* their phylacteries, or pieces of parchment with sentences of the law written in them, fastened to their foreheads and hands to preserve them, as they thought, from witchcraft and all evil? so have the friars pieces of wood which they fancy to be parts of the cross, the virgin's hair-lace, or some holy relicks or other which they carry about as amulets and preservatives against distempers, mischiefs and dangers. Did the *Pharisees*, under a pretence of long prayers, devour widows houses? so have the friars devoured the houses and estates too both of widows, and many others, under a pretence that they shall be prayed for a long while after they are dead: Were the *Pharisees* very zealous in getting proselytes? *Mat. xxiii. 15.* so are all the papists in propagating their religion. Did the *Pharisees* adorn the sepulchres of the prophets? so do the papists those of their saints. In a word, were the *Pharisees* more earnest for their superstitious rites and ceremonies, than for the solid and substantial worship of Almighty God? It would be well if the monks and friars were not too much their apes in this particular. And thus I might shew how they who profess and call themselves the religious, in the Christian religion, exactly agree almost in every thing with those which our blessed Saviour here calleth *Pharisees*. From whence it is easy to observe what the righteousness of the *Pharisees* was, even a mere outward shew of piety and religion, a specious profession of righteousness, without the practice of it; or at the best, but an external observance of some things only, with the neglect, if not contempt, of others.

Thus we have considered the righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* distinctly and apart. But we must further know, that in many things they agreed: Not as if the *Scribes* were any part or sect of the *Pharisees*, as *Baronius* and others have falsely conjectur'd from *Acts xxiii. 9.* where mention is made of the *Scribes* which were of the *Pharisees* part; for the meaning is not that the *Scribes* were any part of the *Pharisees*, but that some of the *Scribes* took part with the *Pharisees*, as it is plain they did; many of the *Scribes* espousing the same opinions, and being guilty of the same errors as the *Pharisees* were. Hence they are often joined and condemned together by our blessed Saviour for their hypocrisy and deceit, *Mat. xxiii. 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29.* So in my text the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* are put together, as having only such a partial, external and hypocritical righteousness, which can never bring a soul to heaven.

THE next thing to be considered is, wherein *our righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.*

To understand which, we must know that the righteousness of the *Scribes*, and especially that of the *Pharisees*, was in very great repute and esteem among the *Jews*; so that *St. Paul* himself calleth it, τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἰρεσιν ὁρηκείας, the strictest sect of their religion, *Acts* xxvi. 5. and elsewhere, ἀκρίβειαν τῆς πατρὸς νόμου, the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, *Acts* xxii. 3. And the reason was, because the *Pharisees* were exceeding strict and precise in the scrupulous observation of all the outward rites and ceremonies which were either prescribed in the law, or received by tradition from their forefathers; so that rather than do less, they would do a great deal more than was commanded them in the ceremonial law; by which means they were thought, not only by themselves, but by others too, to be exceeding righteous, and to abound in the observance of the Mosaic law. But our Saviour was quite of another mind; and tells us in plain terms, that altho the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* seemed to be exceeding righteous, and were accounted so by others, yet unless our righteousness exceeds theirs, we shall never go to heaven. But heaven is a place which I am confident we all desire to go to: And therefore it concerns us highly to understand wherein it is that our blessed Saviour would have us to be more righteous than the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were in order to our going thither. For, it seems, we must not only be righteous, but our righteousness must exceed the very exceeding righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; otherwise, our Saviour himself tells us in plain terms, *that we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And therefore, as it behoves me to be cautious in expressing, it behoves you to be as serious in considering wherein you are to excel and exceed the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, so as to be more just and righteous than they were; which that you may all be, and so meet together again in heaven, I desire you to resolve before-hand to practise what I shall prove to be your duty and interest in this particular. And do not fancy to your selves that your coming hither to hear or learn how to be truly righteous, will make you so: But assure your selves, the knowing what I shall tell you without the doing of it, will be so far from advancing you to happiness, that it will but sink you deeper into misery and torment: Insomuch that did I think you would not sincerely endeavour to be as righteous as I shall prove you ought to be, I should be loth to tell you of it. But why do I speak of that? It is God's command, and my duty to tell you of it; and therefore, whether you hear, or whether you forbear, be it known unto you, there are three things especially wherein *your righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*; in being internal as well as external, universal not partial, and sincere not hypocritical. In speaking to which, expect not any new notions, fine words, or quaint phrases from me; for it is a matter that concerns your everlasting salvation, and therefore in treating of it, you must give me leave to speak as plain and home unto all as possibly I can.

I. IN the first place therefore, I say, *that your righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, in the internal as well as external performance of your whole duty both to God and man: I say, as well as external; because I would not have you think that your righteousness should be so altogether spiritual and internal, that you need not, or ought not, to make any external expression of it: For you having bodies as well as souls, both made by God, you are equally bound in both to worship and obey him that made them; yea, you are expressly commanded to glorify God both in your body, and in your spirits, because both are his, 1 Cor. vi. 20. And therefore it is a fond and foolish thing to imagine that because you are commanded in one place to worship God in spirit, therefore you need not worship him in your bodies, when elsewhere you are plainly commanded to worship him in both. Wherefore supposing that you are not so ignorant of your duty and obligations to the great Creator of the world, as not to perform at least external worship and obedience to him, I must farther tell you that this is not enough: this is no more than what the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did: *They made clean the outside of the platter and the cup; but within they were full of extortion and excess.* Mat. xxiii. 25. Whereas the inside and outside ought to have been both clean. *Thou blind Pharisee, saith he, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also,* ver. 26. And because they were altogether for outside righteousness, hence it was that our Saviour denounced that dreadful woe against them, *Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited*

sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward; but within are full of dead mens bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so, saith he, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men; but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity, ver. 27, 28.

IN this therefore it is that your righteousness ought to exceed theirs. They constantly prayed, went to their churches or synagogues, kept their sabbaths, heard the word of God, pay'd their tithes and offerings, gave much alms to the poor, and the like, as you may do; but their fault was, they did then, as the papists now generally do, they looked only to the *opus operatum*, they minded no more than to do the work, it was no matter how, so the matter they performed was but good, they never regarded in what manner they performed it. And herein it is that your righteousness and obedience ought to excel theirs. You must not think it is enough to come to church to hear the prayers read, or a sermon preached, to give something now and then to the poor, and the like: If this was all that is required of you, it would be easy enough to get to heaven, and none but fools and madmen would be shut out. But mistake not your selves; there is a great deal more than this required to the due performance of every duty that is required of you: For it is the heart which the all-seeing God, the searcher of hearts, principally observes in every act which you do perform; and howsoever plausible your profession is, how specious soever your pretences to religion be, unless your hearts be united, and your whole souls employed in every act you undertake, you are no better than the *Scribes and Pharisees*, mere formal professors, outside Christians, and that is the best that can be said of you.

BUT to come still closer to you: You are all assembled at this time in the presence of Almighty God: You have been hearing very solemn prayers, together with the scriptures read, and something from the word of God preached to you: Yea, some of you have this day received the consecrated bread and wine, the mystical body and blood of Christ. But let me tell you, never a soul of you hath done so much as one good work, or righteous act this day, unless your hearts as well as bodies have been engaged and taken up in the performance of it. What, do ye think to pray with the tongue without the heart; to hear with your ears without the heart; to receive sacraments at the mouth without the heart? No, it is impossible; for there is nothing of goodness, nothing of righteousness in any thing you do, any farther than as it proceeds from your hearts; so that you cannot be properly said to pray, unless your hearts be possessed at the same time with a due sense of God's greatness and glory; and of your own wants, and unworthiness to have them supplied. You cannot be properly said to partake of the mystical body and blood of Christ, unless you receive it with humble, penitent and believing hearts: You cannot be properly said to hear the word of God, altho you be now hearkening to it, unless your hearts and affections be moved suitably to what you hear; and unless you be resolved by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, to observe and practise it. The same may be said of all other duties whatsoever, whether they have relation to God or man: For you can never be properly said to perform your duty to either, any further than as your hearts and hands, yea, all the faculties of your souls and members of your bodies always go thither. And therefore, as ever you desire that your *righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, so as to be true righteousness indeed, you must be sure that your hearts as well as bodies be employed in the performance of it.

2. YOUR righteousness should exceed theirs likewise in the universality of it, in respect of the object as well as of the subject, so as to obey all the commands of God, as well as every one of them, with all your hearts: For herein it was that the righteousness of the *Scribes and Pharisees* was so defective, even in being only partial: They did some things, but not all that was requir'd of them: They were very precise and scrupulous in keeping the sabbath, in paying their tithes and offerings, in all the external rites of divine worship, and so in observing the duties of the first table: But as for those of the second, their duties to their neighbour, they regarded them no more than as if they were not at all concerned in them. This our blessed Saviour observed both in the *Scribes and Pharisees*, and rebuk'd them sharply for it: *Woe, saith he, unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; For ye pay tithe of mint and annise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: These ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone, Mat. xxiii. 23.* As if he should have said, you ought to perform your duty, not only to God but your neighbour too, and to your neighbour for God's

fake:

fake : As you pretend to worship and obey God, you ought to be merciful, just and faithful unto men. Where we may observe how he calls judgment, mercy, and faith, or fidelity, the weightier matters of the law, because without them, whatsoever else we do will stand us in no stead, these being the great and necessary duties which God requires of us to one another.

HEREIN therefore it is *that your righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, even in its extent and latitude, every way corresponding with the laws and commands of God : For this is the righteousness which God requires, even an universal conformity both of our will and actions, or our whole man, to those eternal rules of piety and justice, which are revealed to us in holy scripture ; so that the foundation of it must be laid in true and universal piety towards God, which doth not consist only in praying, hearing, and the like ; but especially in loving and fearing, in worshipping and adoring, in honouring and serving the eternal God with a perfect heart and a willing mind. And howsoever exact and critical you may be in performing your duty unto God, it will avail you nothing unless you be likewise just and equitable, kind and merciful, loving and charitable to one another, yea, to your very enemies. Nay, more than that, you cannot be righteous to God, but you must of necessity be so to men too : For as you are his creatures, you owe universal obedience to all the laws of God ; and if you neglect any, you are unjust towards him. But you all know that justice and charity are commanded by God as well as praying and hearing ; and therefore every act of injustice against your neighbour is likewise an act of impiety towards God : so that true piety cannot possibly consist with envy, malice, hatred, fraud, oppression, censoriousness, or with the wilful neglect of any duty whatsoever which we owe to one another : And therefore nothing can be more absurd and ridiculous, than to fancy your selves to be good and righteous, holy and pious men, because you come to church and hear a sermon, and the like, upon the Lord's day ; if in the mean while you make no conscience of cheating, backbiting and wronging others. And so also on the other side, what if you pay every one their own ? What tho you live quietly and civilly with your neighbours ? Yea, What tho ye relieve the poor, feed the hungry, cloath the naked, and the like ? Are you therefore righteous ? No, be not deceived ; altho these be great things in themselves, they are nothing by themselves ; nothing unless they be accompanied with, and proceed from an universal obedience to all the laws of God : For as we say of good and evil, *Malum fit ex quolibet defectu, bonum ex integris causis*, the same may be applied to righteous and unrighteous men. Tho a man punctually observeth all the rest, and yet wilfully omits any one duty either to God or man, he is upon that account an unrighteous man. Neither can any one be truly denominated righteous, but he that *hath respect unto all the commandments of God*, as David had, *Psal. cxix. 6.* which if any here present have not, as I fear there are too many ; What do you do more than the *Scribes and Pharisees* ? They were as precise and exact in many things, as any of you can be for your hearts. And yet for all that your Saviour here tells you in plain terms, *That unless your righteousness exceed theirs, you can never enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And therefore, as ever you desire to come thither, you must be sure to do, not only some, or many, or most of the things which are enjoined you, but all and every particular duty which you know your selves to be obliged to perform either to God or man ; otherwise you'll be no better than the *Scribes and Pharisees*, and so never likely to go to heaven.

3. YOUR righteousness should exceed theirs also in integrity and sincerity of heart : For this was one of the principal things wherein the righteousness of the *Scribes and Pharisees* failed, and came short of what it ought in truth to be ; even because tho they did many things in themselves good, yet they did them for a bad end, to be seen of men, and so reputed and applauded as righteous by them, *Mat. vi. 2, 5, 16.* Hence our Saviour so often calls them hypocrites ; *Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*, *Mat. xxiii. 23.* because they studied more to seem, than to be righteous ; and so in all they did, they aimed not at God's glory but their own ; by which means all the religion which they so much boasted of, degenerated into base hypocrisy and deceit. And therefore, if we would be righteous and religious indeed, we must needs exceed them in this particular, so as to have no by end, or sinister designs in what we do ; not to pray, or fast, or perform any other religious act whatsoever, out of any such low, and pitiful design, as to advance our temporal interest, or to get applause and credit among men ; but our only aim and design must be to *please and glorify God*, *Mat. v. 16.* and so to *work out our*

salvation with fear and trembling, Phil. ii. 12. Or at least we must sincerely endeavour unto the utmost of our power to do it; and then our righteousness, tho it be not so much applauded by men, be sure it will be accepted of by God, through Jesus Christ our Lord: For this sincerity is indeed our evangelical perfection; that which will be accepted by the gospel in lieu of that absolute perfection which the law of God requires; and by this it is that our *righteousness may not only exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, but we may all become really and truly righteous in our selves, such as the gospel would have us to be in order to our being happy for ever.

THUS we see wherein our *righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*; in being internal, universal, and sincere. The last thing to be considered is, how it appears, *That unless our righteousness thus exceed theirs, we can never enter into the kingdom of heaven*. But this we need not stand long upon, it being so expressly asserted by Christ himself; and I hope there is none here present but will take his word for any thing, especially for what concerns your salvation, seeing it is by him only that you can be saved. But if you would know the reason why *your righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, in order to your going to heaven; in few terms it is only this: Because it is necessary that you should be righteous, which it is plain that the *Scribes and Pharisees* were not: For if theirs had been true righteousness, yours needed not to exceed it. But the truth is, no man deserves the name of a righteous man, but he that exceeds the *Scribes and Pharisees* in all the fore-mentioned particulars: For he is truly righteous in nothing that is not sincerely righteous in all things; and he that is not truly righteous, you'll all grant he can never go to heaven, as being a person not only unworthy, but incapable of those celestial joys.

WHICH being seriously considered, I hope I need not use any arguments to persuade you to exceed the *Scribes and Pharisees* in being truly righteous: For if your Saviour's own words will not prevail upon you, I am sure nothing that I can say will do it. Howsoever, give me leave in your Saviour's name to call upon you, to advise, exhort, and beseech you to labour after that righteousness which Christ in his Gospel requires of you; not such a righteousness as the *Scribes and Pharisees* had, not such a righteousness as many among us so much pretend to, consisting only in the outward performance of some religious duties; such a righteousness as this, you may be confident, will never carry you to heaven; for Christ himself hath told you in plain terms it will not: And therefore it is quite another righteousness which you must endeavour after, even such a righteousness as consists in nothing less than in a sincere devotion of your selves wholly to the service of Almighty God, and in the performance of universal obedience to all his laws and commands; for nothing less than this will serve your turn. And do not say within your selves that this is more than you can do: For there is never a one of you but as yet is in a capacity of attaining to it; for if you do but as much as you are able, God is ready to enable you to do what otherwise you cannot, and for Christ's sake to accept of your sincere, instead of perfect righteousness. And therefore do but you do what you can, and I dare assure you no more will be required on your parts: But if you would but all do as much as every one is able, what holy, what righteous creatures would you soon become? especially considering that the Almighty God himself is always at hand to assist your weak endeavours with his own grace and Spirit. And therefore let me beg of you to make no more vain excuses, nor *halt any longer between two opinions*. If you care not whether you go to heaven or no, what do you here? If you do desire in good earnest to live with God and Christ for ever, and to partake of that glory which is prepared for the righteous in the world to come, why do not you endeavour to be such righteous persons, as that glory is prepared for? What, do you think to go to heaven whether you be righteous or no? Hath not Christ told you, you shall not? And would you make him a liar, and his word void and of none effect? No, mistake not your selves, whatsoever becomes of you, Christ's word must stand: So that if you be not truly, universally, and sincerely righteous here, you must of necessity be miserable hereafter; there is no help for it: If you could have been saved without being righteous, he that came to save you would never have required it of you: But you see he hath and doth require it of you, yea, so as to assure you, that you can never go to heaven without it; and therefore it is in vain for you ever to think of coming there, *except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*.

BUT methinks you should not stand out any longer against such plain and express words as these are of our blessed Lord himself: And therefore I hope you will not content yourselves any longer with the bare profession of that most excellent religion you are all of; but are resolved by God's assistance to set upon the practice of whatsoever you know to be required in it; which if you do, you will not only exceed the ancient but the modern *Pharisees* too, whether they be of the protestant or popish religion, so as to be both truly righteous here, and eternally blessed hereafter.

Which God grant that you may all be, through Jesus Christ our Lord, &c.

S E R M O N XCVII.

The Holiness of Christians ought to be conspicuous.

MAT. V. 16.

Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

WHEN it pleased the only-begotten Son of God to come down in his own person to visit his creatures upon earth and to converse with men in their own likeness, he found that all flesh was corrupt, and mankind in general addicted either to idolatry or superstition; for all the world then were either *Jews* or *Gentiles*: But the *Gentiles*, although they had some confused notions of a deity, such as dim-sighted nature could direct them to; yet *when they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, but changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things*, Rom. i. 21, 23. Wherefore they being guilty of such gross idolatry in worshipping the creature more than the Creator, God blessed for evermore, God was justly pleased to give them up to uncleanness and vile affections, whereby their moral actions became as corrupt and bad as their righteous services; insomuch that although they still retained some common and natural distinctions betwixt good and evil, virtue and vice, among them; yet it was very rare to find one so much as striving to square his life according to them, so as to chuse the good and refuse the evil, to embrace virtue and eschew vice, according to the knowledge they had of them. And if any did chance to offer at something like to virtue and goodness, yet it was still attended with so many failures and imperfections, that there was nothing of real virtue and goodness in it.

AND as for the *Jews*, although they had the law and the prophets to direct them both in their religious and civil actions, in the service of God and behaviour to

one another, yet came they very short of performing their duty to either; insomuch that the very *Pharisees* themselves, which were, as the apostle tells us, *Acts xxvi. 5. The strictest sect of all the Jewish religion*, they placed their religion only in external rites and ceremonies; as in frequent washing of themselves and vessels; in often fasting with sad countenances and disfigured faces; in long prayers and hypocritical giving of alms to be seen of men; in avoiding the company of such as themselves judged to be sinners; in paying the lesser tithes which the law required: and in the superstitious observation of all such things as they received *by tradition* from their forefathers, whereby they made the law of *none effect*, as Christ himself told them, *Mat. xv. 6.* Howsoever, by this means they were in great esteem among the people, being accounted the most devout and religious sect among them; notwithstanding they neglected the weightier matters of the law, as our Saviour himself told them to their faces, saying, *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and annise, [and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone, Mat. xxiii. 23.]*

WHEN Christ therefore came into the world, finding mankind, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, so strangely corrupted and debauched both in their principles and practices, although his great design was to offer up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for their sins, yet it was necessary also that he should instil into them better principles, and acquaint them more clearly with the nature of true religion; without the practice whereof they would not be fitted nor qualified to partake of that happiness which he design'd to purchase for them with his own blood. Hence therefore it was, that altho his death would have been as meritorious for us as soon as he was born, as it was afterwards, yet he thought good to live about 30 years, as it were *incognito*, in the world; and after that too, before he would die for us, he continued above three years conversing with all that had the happiness to enjoy his presence. All which time he spent in working all sorts of real miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine, and in instructing mankind more perfectly than they had been before instructed, in the principles of religion and morality; how to serve God, and love one another better than they had done before. And intending now to introduce a new religion into the world, grounded upon clearer principles, and better promises than any before had been; for this purpose he chose out several persons to be daily conversant with him, that so having his doctrine and discipline frequently inculcated into them, they might fully understand what he would have mankind both to believe and do, and so might faithfully transmit the same down to posterity, that all mankind might afterwards know how to come to heaven. To these persons therefore, in a more particular manner, and to all in general that would come unto him, he revealed and explained the whole mystery of godliness: Assuring them all along that the strictest sect of all their religion, even the *Pharisees* themselves, howsoever specious and plausible they seemed to others, yet they came very short of that which he required: *For, saith he, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matth. v. 20.* Whereby he plainly acquainted them, that in order to their attaining everlasting happiness, it was absolutely necessary, not only that they should be righteous, but that they should be more righteous than they were, which hitherto had seemed the most righteous of all among them. And therefore, he would not have them think, that because he came to die for their sins, he therefore came also to destroy the law and the prophets: *No, saith he, I came not to destroy but to fulfil, ver. 17.* He came not to revoke the moral law, but to establish and enforce it with stronger arguments, and with greater obligations to obedience, than ever had been before. And therefore he would have all men know, that they who would be his disciples, so as to be saved by him, must outvie and excell all others, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, in all manner of righteousness both to God and men. And this is that which he assures us of in my text, saying, *Let your light, &c.*

IN speaking to which words, I shall not discourage your attention with putting any superfluous glosses upon them, nor yet with forcing any impertinent observations from them; but in the same order wherein our Saviour spake them to his disciples, I shall endeavour so to explain them unto you, that you may all know the true intent and meaning of your Saviour in them; and for the future, I hope, order your lives and conversations accordingly...

FIRST, saith he, *Let your light*: For the opening of which words, we must look back to *ver. 14.* where our Saviour saith to his disciples, *ye are the light of the world.* But elsewhere he saith of himself, *I am the light of the world,* John viii. 12. And St. John speaking of him saith, *This is the true light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world,* John i. 9. So that Christ and true Christians are equally termed *the lights of the world*, though in diverse respects: Christ is the sun, they the beams that are sent from him; he the fountain, they the streams that flow from that fountain of light; or he is light in and from himself, as theirs is borrowed or derived from him, as the light of the moon is from the sun; so that he giveth light from himself to them, they reflect it from him to others. Before the Sun of righteousness arose with healing in his wings, a spiritual darkness was spread over the face of the whole earth; but so soon as he appeared, he presently shined upon his disciples, first, enlightning them with true knowledge and understanding of the mysteries of salvation: And so they being first enlightened by him, were thereby enabled to enlighten others after the same manner. And hence it is that Christ, the true light, calls his disciples also *The light of the world*: Whereby he intimated to them, how they should carry and behave themselves towards the rest of mankind: For nothing, you know, is more pure, nothing more piercing, nothing more acceptable, nothing more pleasant, nothing more advantageous, nothing more apparent than light: According to all which qualities of light our Saviour would have his disciples to deport themselves in this world; forasmuch as they being sent to open the eyes of others, the eyes of others would be sure to be upon them; as our Saviour intimates in the following words, *A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid: neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house,* Matth. v. 14, 15. By which expressions he acquaints them, that now that he had endowed them with knowledge and grace as with light, they must not think to lie hid; but to be as a city upon an hill, apparent to all that pass by, and as a candle which being lighted, is not put under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that all may see it and receive light from it. And therefore he adds,

LET your light so shine before men; that is, the truth of that grace and faith which you have now received, and wherewith you are enlightned, let it not be obscured with the works of darkness nor eclipsed by the interposition of earthly affections; but let it be so clear, so manifest, so perspicuous and apparent in your lives and conversations unto all men, *That they may see your good works*, that is, that all may clearly see how far you excel others in the performance of all your duties both to God and men: For that we are to understand by good works, not only works of charity, but whatsoever duties God requires of us, either to himself or others: All which are called good works, not as if they were perfectly good, in every circumstance and *punctilio* which the law requires, as the papists would have it, producing these words to prove that all the works of good men were always good works, only because they are called here by the name; whereas nothing can be more plain than that the very best men do many bad works which are contrary to the law, and that their best works come very short of it. And therefore they are here called good works only because the matter of them is good, and as to the manner they are as good as he that doth them can make them; who sincerely endeavours to form them to the law as near as he can; upon which account God for Christ's sake is pleased to accept of them as good works, yea, as our good works too; as our Saviour here intimates, saying, *That they may see your good works*: Not as if they were or could be performed and made good by our own strength and power, as the *Pelagians* would gather from these words: Whereas our Saviour here saith, *That they may see your good works*, only in contra-distinction to the good works of others; and because they are produced both in us, and by us; in us as the subject, and by us as the instrument; but still by the grace of God as the principal efficient cause: As is plain from the last words, *That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is heaven.* From which words it is manifest, that all the glory of good works is to be ascribed only unto God, not to the men that do them: Whereas, if they did them by their own strength, the glory would redound to them, and not to God.

BUT from these last words we may further observe, That God's glory should be the ultimate end of all our actions, according to that of the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 31. And therefore, when he commands *that our light so shine before men, that others may*
see

see our good works; we are not to end here, but to look further. For no man can do good works only to be seen of men; for he that doth any works only to be seen of men, by that very means makes them to be bad works. For this our Saviour, in this very sermon, doth expressly forbid, *Mat. vi. 1, 5.* And in these very words, altho he would have *our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works;* yet he doth not say, that we are therefore to do them, that others may see them, and so make that one end of our actions; but only that we are so to do them that others may see them and glorify God for them: So that his glory is to be not only the ultimate, but the only end of all our good works. And therefore our Saviour propounds this as the only end *why our light should shine before men,* even, *that they seeing our good works might glorify our Father which is in heaven,* so as to give him thanks and praise for his assisting men in the doing of such good works, and to acknowledge the truth of that religion, wherein he is pleased to vouchsafe us such assistances.

THE words being thus particularly explained, it is easy to discover the true meaning and intent of them; which in general amounts to this, That they who embrace the christian religion, and profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, should be eminent in good works, so as to excel the professors of all other religions; that every one that sees and duly weighs a christian life and conversation, might be thereby convinced of the excellency of his religion above all others: Or, that all such as are converted to the christian faith should be, as the apostle words it, *blameless and harmless, as the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, amongst whom they should shine as lights in the world,* *Phil. ii. 15.* This is to have *our light shine before men* indeed, when they can see what we are by what we do, and know us to be christians by our being better than other men, and by our setting all others an example of true piety and vertue in our lives and conversations.

NOW we being all in the number of those who profess themselves to be christians, and by consequence are bound to be such excellent persons as these words import; there are two things which we are all very highly concerned to understand, in order to our right observing what is here enjoined. The first is, Wherein a christian should excel all persons of other persuasions. And then secondly, What reasons he hath to do so.

THE first question, wherein a christian should excel others, supposes that men of other religions, as *Jews, Heathens, or Mahometans,* may have some shadow or resemblance of vertue in them, and may do some things like to good works; but that they that are of the christian religion should excel them all in being and in doing good: And so that is not enough or sufficient for christians that they be or live like other men; but they must exceed not only the vulgar sort of pretenders to vertue and morality, but the highest and exactest moralists too that ever lived without the pale of the church, howsoever eminent they have been in the esteem of men for any vertue or seeming goodness; and that in these three things especially, in the sincerity, universality and constancy of good works.

THE first thing wherein christians ought to excel, is sincerity, where by sincerity I mean that act or rather habit of the mind, whereby we do good works, not out of any ends or sinister designs, but out of pure obedience to the commands of God; so as not only to do what God commandeth, but therefore only to do it because God hath commanded it; a thing which the heathens never dreamt of or be sure were very defective in, forasmuch as they neither rightly believed in the true God, whose commands they were, nor knew them to be his commands; and by consequence, altho they did the thing which was commanded by God, yet they could not be said to obey God's commandment, in that they did not reflect upon his authority in the doing of it, so as to do it upon that account because he was pleased to command it; wherein certainly the very essence of true obedience doth consist; insomuch that howsoever great and good our works may seem to men, they will not be so esteemed by God, neither are truly such in themselves, unless we do eye and respect God, and his commands, in the doing of them; without which brute beasts may do good works as well as men. As for example, You give an alms to the poor, you feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and the like; and it is a good work if you do it out of obedience to God; otherwise you do no more than the ravens did that fed *Elijah*: For their feeding of the prophet was certainly as good a work as to the matter of it, as your feeding of the poor can be. But I suppose

pose you'll all grant, that there is more required of us that are rational creatures, in order to our doing good works, than what the fowls of the air can do; and that we being endowed with reason, whereby we are capable of reflecting upon God himself, in doing what he commands, we are bound to do so; or else we cannot be said to obey his commands.

Now this obedience to the commands of God being so absolutely necessary to the very essence and constitution of good works, hence we may plainly see the vast difference betwixt moral virtues and truly christian graces; the one aiming no higher than to do the thing that is good, the other no lower than to do it because it is good. Morality teacheth us no more than to do the thing that is commanded, christianity no less than to do it because it is commanded. And that is no true christian grace that acts from any other principle than this: Neither can it be a good work that is done upon any other account. And hence it is that we justly assert the works which the papists do so much boast of, to be no good works; forasmuch as they are performed not out of obedience to God, but from self-interest, even out of a design to merit something by them for themselves; which overthrows the very foundation of good works, which can be built upon nothing but obedience unto God. And besides, it is a groundless, absurd and ridiculous thing, to think that poor finite creatures should merit any thing by what they do, from Almighty God, from whom they receive whatsoever they have or are, and so the very power too by which they do it; so that whatsoever good works we do, we are more beholden to God than he to us for our doing them, it being only by him that we are enabled to do them: And therefore, if we would live and act as christians indeed, we must not have any such low and pitiful designs as these are in our observing the commands of God; neither must we content our selves only with doing the thing that is commanded, but we must do it from a principle of true obedience to him that made and governs us and the whole world: By which means we shall not only excel all the professors of all other religions, but the greatest part of them too that profess themselves to be christians.

AND he that thus observes what God commands, merely because he commands it, he cannot but observe all the commands of God, there being the same reason for all the commandments as there is for one. This therefore is the next thing wherein a christian should excel others, even in the universality of his obedience, observing not only one or two, not only many or most, but all the commands of God. *Then shall I not be ashamed, says David, when I have respect to all thy commandments.* As it is not enough to do what is commanded without having respect to the commandment, so neither is it enough to have respect to some, but it must be to all the commandments of God; even as *Zacharias and Elizabeth* are said to be *righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*, Luke i. 6. And indeed unless we thus walk in all we walk in none of the commandments as we ought to do: *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all*, James ii. 10. And therefore as ever ye desire to obey the commands of God, ye must not pick and chuse, take some part, and let the rest alone: No, you must observe either all or none. And by thus performing universal obedience to all the law of God, you will far exceed the strictest of all other religions; who generally take up with some few particular duties instead of universal piety and obedience: As some of the heathens were eminent for justice, others for charity, some for contempt of the world, others for humility; and so some were eminent for one, others for other virtues; but we read of none that was eminent for all, or so much as endeavoured to be so. In this therefore we christians ought to excel them by being holy in all manner of conversation.

AND that at all times too; which is the last thing wherein we ought to excel others, even in walking before the Lord, and serving him without fear *in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life*, Luke i. 74. And truly, as he that is not holy in all things is not holy at all, so he that is not holy at all times is never holy as he ought to be; especially, unless he sincerely endeavours at least to keep his heart in an equal frame of piety and charity at one time as well as at another.

Thus therefore it is that our blessed Lord expects, yea commands, that you and I should, as we are christians, excell all other men, in whatsoever is truly good and virtuous, as much as the light of the sun doth that of the planets, which are enlightened by it; especially, we should exceed all in the sincerity, universality, and constancy of our obedience to all the laws of God.

HAVING thus discovered how *our light should so shine before men, that others may see our good works*; or, wherein we who profess to believe in Christ should excel persons of all other persuasions whatsoever: We are now to consider what reasons there are for it; Why christians should be the best of men: A question necessary to be resolved in these days, wherein christians themselves generally live as if they had no reason to be so good, much less to be better than others, as if Christ so died for their sins, that they might still live in them, or as if Christ had granted such indulgences and licences for sinning as his pretended vicar at *Rome* doth; or howsoever, as if they were not obliged to obey the moral law, as other persons are. For if we seriously survey the lives of christians now, with an impartial eye, we may with grief and sadness behold them so far generally from being better than others, that many others are better than them; the very *Turks* exceeding most christians in their outward reverence and devotion towards God, in zeal for their religion, in charity to the poor, in faithfulness to their word, and uprightness in their dealings; yea, and the heathens themselves, who had nothing but the light of nature to guide them in their actions: How famous have many of them been in their generations for their justice and equity, for their temperance and sobriety, for their gratitude and liberality, for their freedom from luxury and passion, for their contempt of the world, and contentedness with their condition, and for their love and honour to virtue wheresoever they saw it; far beyond the generality of them that profess themselves to be christians in these days; which is a shame to our religion, and a reproach to the gospel of Christ; giving too much occasion to the enemies of Christ to blaspheme his sacred name, and to think that they might learn as much from the heathen oracles, or *Turkish* Alcoran, as from the gospel itself; seeing that they that have the gospel, and read it over and over again, and hear it constantly read and preach'd among them, are for the most part as much debauched in their principles and practices, as they that never heard of it; which is a sad thing to consider, and that which we can never sufficiently lament: Especially, considering that for this God may justly take his gospel from us, and give it to some nation that will improve it better than we have done; which all things considered, we have just cause every moment to expect; especially, unless we make better use of it hereafter, than heretofore we have done: Which that you and I may for the future do, I shall now endeavour to shew what extraordinary advantages we have by the gospel for the refining and reforming of our lives and conversation, and what invincible reasons there are why we who enjoy the gospel should be better than all other persons that have it not, so as to exceed them far in all true virtue and godliness.

FOR *First*, We have clearer discoveries of God's will, and our duty, by the gospel, than ever was before; yea, as clear as possibly can be made unto us. The moral law as it was at first written upon the tables of man's heart, was so defaced by the fall of our first parents, that by the light of reason we can scarce read any one command aright. And though the same law was afterwards transcribed into two tables of stone, that all might have it before their eyes, yet there also it was not so legible as it is in the gospel; as is plain from the strange misconstructions which the *Jews* had put upon it before our Saviour's Time. But he now hath given us such clear interpretations of it, that he which runs may read it, and discern the full extent and latitude of it, there being nothing now of doubt or difficulty in it. And therefore our Saviour doth frequently compare his gospel to light; because by its means, we may so plainly see the things that belong to our everlasting peace, and understand our whole duty both to God and man: God himself having been pleased to come down in his own person, and explain it to us; so that now we can have no excuse for indulging ourselves in any one sin whatsoever. And therefore Christ himself saith, *If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin*, John xv. 22. implying that no man can now in reason expect to palliate and excuse his sin under pretence of ignorance, after that he himself hath so clearly discovered our duty to us. Hence also it is that he elsewhere saith, *that this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*, John iii. 19. As if he should have said, although sin always deserveth death, yet now mankind deserves much more to be condemned to it; if notwithstanding that the light of the gospel is risen upon them, they shall still continue in the works of darkness, and so sin against the light itself. This is the reason too that he pronounceth that dreadful

woe against the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, saying, *Woe unto thee, Chorazin, Woe unto the Bethsaida; for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in thee, they had long ago repented sitting in sackcloth and ashes; but it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for you,* Luke x. 13, 14. And what can you and I expect but that the same woe should be denounced against us, if notwithstanding that more than ordinary light of the gospel which hath shined among us, we do not turn to God, and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind? Certainly, if we do not, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Turks and heathens, at the day of judgment, than for us. And therefore we had need to have a care of ourselves. For now that God hath spoke unto us, not only by his prophets and apostles, but by his own Son too; and hath so clearly discovered unto us his will and pleasure concerning our behaviour to himself and others; he now expects that we faithfully perform it, otherwise the gospel itself, the greatest of all mercies, will in one day rise up in judgment against us; and unless our lives be better than others in time, our condition will be worse than theirs to all eternity.

ESPECIALLY, considering in the next place, that we have not only clearer discoveries of our duty, but a more perfect example and pattern of piety in the gospel, than ever was before, or can be any where else. For there we have the life and actions of Christ himself recorded, *who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth,* 1 Pet. ii. 23. yea, whose whole life was but as one continued act of perfect piety towards God, or else of charity towards men: For he always *went about doing good,* Acts x. 38. Indeed, there was nothing that he did, but what was perfectly good; neither is there any grace or virtue whatsoever, but it appeared in him in its highest beauty and lustre. How humble was he in his carriage, how meek in his expressions, how faithful to his friends, how loving to his enemies, how fervent in prayer, how constant in preaching, how patient under his sufferings, how contented with whatsoever was laid upon him, how free from vice, how full of grace in every thing that he thought, or spake, or did? In all which, he left us *an example that we should follow his steps,* 1 Pet. ii. 21. Yea, himself enjoins all those that would go after him so as to be his disciples, *to deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow him,* Mat. xvi. 24. And elsewhere, *Learn of me,* saith he, *for I am meek and lowly,* Mat. xi. 29. From whence it is plain that Christ expects that you that profess to believe in him, do come as near him as you can, in all your duties both to God and man; and by consequence, that having so exact a pattern of true grace and virtue before your eyes, you imitate it far better than it is possible for them to do which never heard of it.

IN the third place, we have by the gospel, the promises of greater assistances, such as never had been before. Indeed, the great end of the gospel, and of our Saviour's coming into the world, was to be our Saviour, to save us from our sins, both from the guilt and strength of sin. The first he did by making satisfaction for us, by dying in our steads, and so suffering that in our natures, which otherwise we must have suffered in our own persons. The other he hath done by procuring such assistances for us, whereby we may be enabled sincerely to perform whatsoever is required of us. And that this was one great end of Christ's both incarnation and passion, is plain, in that the apostle tells us, that he was sent on purpose *to bless us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities,* Acts iii. 26. And elsewhere it is said, *That he gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works,* Tit. ii. 14. And many such like places there are, which plainly shew that though it was not all, yet it was a great part of Christ's design in coming into the world to make us holy; without which indeed, the pardon of our sins, which he purchased by his death, would avail us nothing; Holiness being indispensably required to the qualifying us for the enjoyment of real and eternal happiness, and therefore; notwithstanding the pardon of our sins, we should be altogether incapable of the joys of heaven, unless our hearts be renewed and our souls inclined to the living God; which can only be done by the assistance of the Holy Ghost: And therefore our Saviour tells us, *that except a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,* John iii. 5. But it is only by Christ our Saviour that we can partake of the graces and influences of the holy Spirit: *Not by the works of the law which we have done,* said the apostle, *but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly thro*

Jesus Christ our Saviour, Tit. iii. 5, 6. And hence it was that the Spirit was not given in so visible a manner until Christ was ascended; but immediately before his ascension he told his disciples, *That he would send the promise of his Father upon them*; Luke xxiv. 49. Which was plainly nothing else but the Holy Ghost, which was before promised, and now fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And therefore, whosoever would believe in Christ aright, must depend upon him not only for pardon, but likewise for the assistance of his grace and Spirit, for the mortifying of his lusts, and making him truly holy. And verily, the promises of the gospel are so full and clear to this purpose, that it is nothing but the extreme neglect of our selves, and the very height of obstinacy that can keep us from partaking of them. For if you be but truly sensible of your sins, and desire to be cleansed from them, and sincerely endeavour to do what you can your selves, and believe in Christ, or trust on him to enable you to do what your selves cannot; I say, if you do but do this, which none of you but may easily do, you cannot miss of receiving such supplies of grace, whereby your strong sins shall not only be subdued, but your dark mind so enlightened, your erroneous judgments so informed, your perverse wills so rectified, your inordinate affections so regulated; your hard hearts so softened, your proud spirits so humbled, your sleepy consciences so awakned, and your whole souls so renewed and sanctified as to be truly wholly in all manner of conversation. For God never yet did, nor never will fail any man that sincerely endeavoured to do what he could to serve him, and trusted in him for his assistance in doing what otherwise he could not. And therefore there is all the reason in the world that we, who have such promises and overtures of grace and assistance made unto us by God himself, by which if we be not failing to our selves we may be enabled from above to perform good works, and exercise all true grace and virtue; all the reason in the world, I say, that we should far exceed all other persons who have nothing but their own natural strength and power to act by, in serving and obeying God, and in doing whatsoever he hath been pleased to require of us.

ESPECIALLY, seeing in the fourth place, that we in the gospel have the greatest assurances of acceptance before God. Whatsoever endeavour any others make after piety and virtue, they have no assurance, nor any grounds to believe that the supreme Being of the world will accept of their faint endeavours instead of real duties, or of their sincerity, if they had any, instead of perfection: Or rather they had just cause to suspect and believe the contrary, even that whatsoever they did, and how sincere soever they were in doing of it, yet it coming infinitely short of what infinite justice required, it could never be accepted of by God. But we know and are assured, that if we do but sincerely endeavour unto the utmost of our power to adjust our actions unto the law of God, although at the best they come very short of it, yet in and through Jesus, both our persons and performances shall be accepted by him: For this is most clearly held forth to us in the whole tenure and œconomy of the gospel, which also is confirmed to us, by so many and such real miracles, that there is no place left for doubting and unbelief; but we have stronger grounds to be assured of it, than we have to believe any thing we see or hear; the eternal God himself having not only infallibly attested it, but confirmed that his infallible testimony by such miracles as exceed the greatest demonstrations in the world, especially by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereby, as the apostle argues, *Acts xvii. 31. He hath given assurance unto all men*, that Christ is ordained to judge the world in righteousness; and by consequence, that whatsoever is asserted by, or concerning him in the gospel, is infallibly true; and so that if we believe in him, our former sins shall not only be pardoned, but our future duties shall be accepted by God, if they be sincerely performed, notwithstanding the manifold failures and imperfections there may be in them; which is the highest obligation imaginable for us to use the utmost of our power and skill, in the performing all virtuous and good actions that we can, seeing we are so much assured, that tho they be not absolutely good in themselves, yet God will accept of them as such in Jesus Christ; which consideration, methinks, should have that power upon us, as to force us all into stedfast resolutions, by the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, to leave no stone unturned, to neglect no grace, and omit no duty that is required of us, as knowing that God in Christ will be well pleased with it, and with us too for doing it; which should make us think scorn to be overtaken by those to whom the gospel is not so clearly revealed, and purpose for the future to surpass and exceed them all in good and pious works.

AND that which adds weight and force to all the foregoing reasons, is, That in the last place, we have so great an assurance in the gospel, not only of our present acceptance, but future happiness, in case we practise what the gospel requires of us. The heathens by the light of nature could discern but very little of a future life, and therefore were forced to resolve all the reward of virtue into virtue itself, making the satisfaction which arises from the exercise of it, a sufficient recompence for our endeavours after it. The *Mahometans* speak much of the world to come under the name of paradise; but placing all the happiness which is there to be expected, only in sensual pleasures and delights, they thereby make no real happiness at all, as being no greater than what brute beasts may partake of as well as we. The *Jews* indeed had some intimations of an eternal happiness as the consequent of true holiness in this life; but it was represented to them for the most part in such obscure types, and intermingled with so many temporal promises, that they generally had but very dark and doubtful apprehensions of it; insomuch that many of them, to wit, the *Sadducees*, utterly denied both the existence of spirits and resurrection of the dead, and by consequence the existence of the soul too in the other world, and the resurrection of the body to eternal life. But now, *By the gospel*, as the apostle saith, *our Saviour Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light*, 1 Tim. i. 10. that is, he hath now given us in the gospel, such clear and infallible assurances of an eternal life and happiness attending those who repent and believe his gospel, that none can believe the gospel, and yet deny that which is so plainly asserted in it. And if we seriously consider the nature and excellency of that happiness which the gospel assures us God will graciously bestow upon them that love and obey him, we must needs acknowledge it to be the highest encouragement imaginable to all manner of virtue and good works: For certainly that happiness which the Gospel proposeth to them that obey it, is the highest that is possible for a creature to be made capable of; so great, that I am altogether as unable to express, as I am desirous to enjoy it, as consisting in nothing less than in the clear vision and perfect fruition of the infinite God, the chiefest good himself: The consideration whereof should make us all, methinks, throw away the thoughts of all things else, and trouble our selves about nothing but how to get to heaven, and by consequence how to walk in that narrow path which leads unto it, and never think we can do enough for that, which is not only infinitely more than we can deserve, but infinitely greater too than we are able to conceive. It is an astonishing mercy, that the most high God should ever accept, by any means, of what we poor sinful mortals do; but that he should recompense our transient, weak, and faint performances, with nothing less than a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, this is such an inducement and encouragement to universal obedience, that we may justly suspect our selves to be distracted in our minds, as well as corrupt in our affections, unless it prevail upon us to devote ourselves wholly unto the service of the living God, and to the obedience of the gospel of Jesus Christ; as knowing that unless we do it, we shall not only be deprived of this transcendent happiness, but condemned too to the greatest misery that our natures can possibly be capable of; whereas on the other side, if we do it, we shall as certainly, not only be freed from that transcendent misery, but be enstated also in the greatest happiness that our souls can possibly be invested with. And therefore I may conclude this with the words of the apostle, *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

THUS I have shewn now what reasons you and I who profess our selves to be Christians, have to be eminent for good works, so as to excel all of other religions in true piety and virtue; in that we have clearer discoveries of God's will and our own duty, a more perfect example and pattern how to do it, promises of greater assistance from God himself to do it, and stronger assurances, not only of acceptance of what we do in this life, but likewise of an eternal recompence of reward in the life to come. And need I now use any more arguments to persuade you to endeavour at least to be eminent in all true grace and virtue? Will it not be superfluous after so many reasons as have been produced for it? Verily, one would think it would be so; and I desire to hope the best of you all, and that you will not content your selves with the bare profession of that excellent and only true religion which you are of, nor yet with the practice of some few particular duties required in it; but that you will now use the utmost of your power and skill to be such as your religion commands you should be, even far exceeding men of other persuasions; that

every one may see what religion you are of, by your being and living better than other men. And, Oh that this might be the happy issue of this discourse, and of your coming hither at this time! Even that from this day forward you would all strive and contend about nothing else but which should live the most like christians, and which should most excel others in an universal obedience both to the law and gospel; that all here present might for the future shine as so many lights in the world. And let me tell you, this would be the way to shame both Jews and Infidels into the embracement of the christian religion. This would be the way too to convince papists, hereticks and schismatics of their errors, when they shall see you that are found in the faith outstripping and excelling them in your lives and conversation: All the arguments in the world would not prevail so much upon them as this one: And therefore, if you have any love either for your religion or your own souls, halt no longer between two opinions; but if you be christians, manifest your selves to be so by your eminency in good works, excelling all others in your love to God's person, in your obedience to his precepts, in your fear of his threatnings, in your trusting on his promises, in your faith in his Son, in your loyalty to your sovereign, in your patience under your sufferings, in your contempt of the world, in your faithfulness to your friends, in your love to your enemies, in your constancy in praying, in your seriousness in hearing, in your frequenting the sacrament, in your justice in your dealing, in your charity to the poor, in your lowliness in your own eyes, and in all other whether christian graces or moral virtues whatsoever: For this is that which Christ expects and commands from you all, saying, *Let your light so shine, &c.*

S E R M O N XCVIII.

The Wisdom of being Holy.

P S A L. CXI. 10.

The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.

AS nothing is more ridiculous in itself, nor more odious and detestable both to God and man, than hypocrisy, or counterfeit religion; so neither is there any thing more excellent in itself, more acceptable to God, nor more advantageous to mankind, than real and true piety; which is therefore commended to us in holy scripture, under the name and notion of whatsoever we can desire to make us happy or do us good. Are we covetous of riches? The apostle tells us, that *Godliness with contentment is great gain*, 1 Tim. vi. 6. Yea, That *godliness is profitable for all things*, ch. iv. 6. Which I am sure nothing in the world besides is. Are we ambitious of honours? The truly pious are certainly invested with the highest honours that it is possible for a creature to attain unto: For he is honoured by God himself, the fountain of all true honour, 1 Sam. ii. 30. And therefore *the righteous is said to be more excellent than his neighbour*, Prov. xii. 26. Are we desirous of pleasure and delight? The *ways of wisdom*

wisdom or true piety, *are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17. *Yea, Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour*, ver. 16. Neither is there any thing that is or can be the object of our soul's desire, but it is either contained in, or may be obtained by true piety and religion.

BUT notwithstanding, seeing the wealth and honours, the life and pleasures, and all the good things else which attend on godliness, are of another and higher nature than the things that go under those names among the men of this world; so that none can attain unto them without neglecting, or at least despising all things upon earth; hence piety itself is apt to be branded with the ignominious name of folly; and those who are truly religious, are commonly reputed little better than fools and ideots, because, forsooth, their minds being always fixed upon higher objects, they cannot bring them down so low as to be always employed about the toys and trifles of this transient world; so that they let slip many opportunities of getting or encreasing their estates, because they will not use such unlawful means as others do about it. They cannot be so plausible in flattering, so subtle in projecting, so cunning in equivocating, so confident in lying, so ingenious in cheating, so artificial in cozening as others are, and therefore they are thought to want the wit wherewith others are endowed by nature, or have acquired by art.

BUT if we consult the judgment of those which are truly wise, or search into the oracles of the all-wise God himself, we shall soon find the contrary; even that the wicked and impious, howsoever cunning and witty they may seem, are really the greatest fools and mad-men upon earth; and the truly pious or godly, howsoever simple and ignorant they appear, are really the wisest and most knowing persons in the world; which were you but thoroughly convinced of, it would set an extraordinary edge upon your desires after holiness: For I dare say, you would all willingly be, and shew yourselves to be wise men, this being a matter of real esteem, and great reputation in the world. But if it be impossible for you to attain to true wisdom, until you first attain to true piety, you must needs follow after holiness in order to the accomplishment of your desires to be wise. This therefore is that which I shall endeavour at this time to prove; and for that end have chosen these words from whence to demonstrate to you, that sin is indeed the greatest folly that we can be guilty of, and holiness the highest wisdom that we can ever attain unto. *The fear of the Lord, saith the Psalmist, is the beginning of wisdom: A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.*

FOR the opening of which words, we must first consider what we are to understand here by *the fear of the Lord*: For the understanding whereof,

FIRST, We must know that the eternal God, as he is the supreme Being and Governour of the world, is the only object of our fear: For though other irascible affections be placed only upon evil, this of fear is to be plac'd only upon the chiefest good; not because he hath any thing of evil in him, but because he is above all evil; for that I am to fear most, from which I may receive the greatest good, and which by consequence can with-hold the greatest good from me, and lay the greatest evil upon me: Now sin that is the worst of evils, can do us no hurt unless God please, who is so infinitely good, that he would not suffer sin to be, but that he is so infinitely powerful that he can produce good from it: It is only for sin indeed, but it is only by God that we can be destroy'd; and if sin may not, certainly nothing else ought to be feared in comparison of God; no, not the devil himself, who can do no more without God's permission, than the weakest creature in the world: His hands are tied, his power restrained, his bounds are set and limited by Omnipotence itself: He could not touch *Job's* cattle till he had received permission from God; neither could he come near his body, till his commission was both renewed and enlarged: So neither he nor any other creature in the world can bring us into the least evil, without the commission, or at least the permission of the chiefest good, our Creator: They may oppress us, they may reproach us, they may wound us, they may kill us; but they cannot hurt us without God, who can turn all seeming goods into real evils, and all such seeming evils into real goods. Hence our Saviour enjoins us *not to fear them which can kill the body, but him who can destroy both soul and body in hell*, Mat. x. 28. Others may kill our bodies but they cannot kill our souls; and though they may kill our bodies they cannot destroy them, for God can raise them up again. But if God himself sets himself against us, it is not in the power of all the creatures in the world to relieve or help us: So that, as the apostle saith, *It is a fear-*

ful thing indeed to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. x. 31. He doth not say, it is a fearful thing to fall into poverty; it is a fearful thing to fall into disgrace; it is a fearful thing to fall into sickness; it is a fearful thing to fall into the jaws of death, or into the hands of cruel men; but, *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* It is true, it may seem a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a righteous judge, an angry king, or a tyrannizing devil; but woe be to him that falls into the hands of the living God, from whom no creature is able to rescue or deliver him: So that we have so much cause to fear God, that we have cause to fear nothing in the world but him, nothing being able to remove any evil from us, or to confer any good upon us, nothing able to lay any evil upon us, or withhold any good from us, but only He; who should therefore be not only the chiefest but the only object of our fear, so as to fear and dread no person or thing in the world but him. So *Isa. viii. 13.*

Now this our fear of God we ought to express by having high and reverential apprehensions of him, of his greatness, power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, and all his incomprehensible perfections, which we are still to be thinking of, so as to admire, reverence, and adore them, so as never to take his sacred name into our lips, without lifting up our hearts unto him; much more when we speak unto him, we must not dare to utter any thing unseemly or irreverently before him, but still follow the apostle's rule, *To serve him with reverence and godly fear,* Heb. xii. 28. Yea, our fear of God should be, and if it be real, will be expressed by our care to avoid whatsoever is displeasing to him, and to perform whatsoever is commanded or enjoined by him; otherwise we in vain pretend to fear God.

HENCE therefore the fear of God is ordinarily put in scripture for the sum and substance of true religion and sincere piety; the fear of God and godliness being equivalent terms, both signifying one and the same thing. Thus *Job* is said to be *an upright man, one that feared God,* Job i. 8. He that fears God must needs be an upright man; and none can be an upright man that doth not fear God. Thus, *Psal. xxxiv. 11. Prov. xv. 16.* and so all along, especially in the old testament, the fear of the Lord is put for all the worship and service which we owe to God, for the whole duty of man: And therefore, in the new testament, where the Greek useth *εὐσεβεία*, godliness, the Syriack always renders it by *ܐܠܗܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ*, the fear of God; as where we read, *having a form of godliness*, in the language which our Saviour spake it is render'd by *ܐܠܗܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ* who have a form of the fear of God, that is, of godliness.

AND the reason why the fear of God is thus used to express universal holiness or piety, is, because no acts of piety can be performed without it; for we are to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*, 1 Cor. vii. 1. Neither are there any acts of piety but what proceed from it: For *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil*, Prov. xvi. 6. yea, *the fear of the Lord is to hate evil*, Prov. viii. 13. it being impossible for a man to fear God and love sin at the same time: So that didst thou fear the great God as thou oughtest to do, thou couldst not but reverence his presence, and dread his power; thou couldst not but admire his wisdom, and love his beauty; thou couldst not but be fearful of his judgments, and thankful for his mercies; thou couldst not but tremble at his threatnings, and trust on his promises; thou couldst not but avoid whatsoever he hath forbidden, and perform whatsoever he hath commanded; thou couldst not but serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind, so as never to depart from him: *I will put my fear*, saith he, *into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*, Jer. xxxii. 40. The true fear of God settles and fixes our minds so, that neither the allurements of the world can draw us, nor the temptations of Satan can drive us from him; and therefore it is no wonder that true piety in general is signified by our fearing God.

IN the next place, This fear of God or true holiness, that is, the universal conformity of our natures, will, and actions, to the commands of the most high God, is here said to be *the beginning of wisdom*, ראשית חכמה, the beginning, and the head, or perfection of wisdom; for the word ראשית signifies both: So that the meaning of the words in general is, that true piety is both the beginning and end, the inchoation and the perfection of wisdom; or, as St. Chrysostom expounds it, is, πηγὴ, ῥίζα, ὑπόθεσις, the fountain, the root, the ground, the all of wisdom. So that he who fears God is a wise man; yea he is therefore a wise man, because he fears God: and he who fears not God, is a fool; therefore a fool because he doth not fear God.

THE first thing therefore I would have you to observe from these words, is, That he that doth not fear God, but still continues in his sins, hath not as yet attained so far as to the beginning, the very lowest degree of wisdom; he hath not so much as begun to be wise, and by consequence is a very fool: He may justly be called a *Nabal*, for folly is with him; because sin is with him; which, all things considered, is the greatest folly that a man can possibly be guilty of.

IN speaking to which, it would be an endless thing to reckon up the many places of scripture wherein sinners are called fools, yea and madmen too. A notable example of it we have in the parable of the prodigal, who having spent all his time and wealth in rioting, drunkenness, and such like sins, our blessed Saviour saith, *When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough?* Luke xv. 17. When he came to himself: It seems the man had hitherto been besides himself, perfectly distracted, and broken in his intellectuals: But when he bethought himself of going to his father, then he began to come to himself, to be recovered from his former folly, madness and distraction. Now by the prodigal our Saviour there means all manner of persons who continue in their sins and will not return to God; and by his coming to himself, he means his return or conversion unto God: so that so long as any of you refuse to fear God and keep his commandments, and chuse to feed upon husks with the swine of this world, rather than upon the bread of life, with the angels and saints; whatsoever thoughts you may have of your wisdom and sobriety, in the judgment of our blessed Saviour himself, you are no better than distracted persons, beside your selves; neither can you come to your selves but by returning unto God: Which observation, rightly considered, cannot surely but be very prevalent upon you, to shame you out of your sins, into the fear and love of God: And therefore I shall endeavour to explain and confirm it farther to you, shewing you both the *εἶς* and the *διότι* of it, that sinners are really fools, and why are they so, and wherein especially they manifest themselves to be so.

FIRST therefore, that every sinner is a fool, and by consequence, that your selves are fools so long as sinners, you cannot but grant and acknowledge, if you do but consider these things, which are clear demonstrations of this great truth, that every sinner is a fool.

1st, You know a fool by his dulness, stupidity, and ignorance of what is necessary for him to know. The wisest man in the world doth not know all things, and the greatest fool in the world may know some things; and therefore folly doth not consist so much in being altogether ignorant, but in being ignorant of such things, the knowledge whereof is necessary to make men happy. A natural fool may know how to pursue a cloud, and to play with feathers, and yet be a fool for all that; and so may a spiritual fool too, he may know how to catch at a bubble, and gape after air, I mean, he may know how to humour the world, and get riches: But what of all that? He knows nothing of God, nothing of Christ, nothing of true grace and virtue, and so nothing that is necessary for him to know. He may have some dark and confused notions of such spiritual things, as the veriest fool in the world may have of temporal; but he knows nothing clearly, nothing distinctly, nothing experimentally, nothing practically, as he ought to know it. A fool, or madman, may and ordinarily doth conceit himself to be very wise, and knowing more than others; but his conceits of himself cannot make others believe so, if his actions declare the contrary. So you may fancy to your selves that you have attained to the great knowledge of God, but you may fancy to your selves what you please, if you do not fear God, I am sure you do not know him; for it is absolutely impossible to know so great and glorious, so wise and powerful, so just and terrible a God as he is, and not to fear and dread him. As *David* saith, *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee*; Psal. ix. 10. so we may say of all other duties whatsoever, they that know God, they cannot but love and honour him, they cannot but serve and worship him, they cannot but obey and fear him, and by consequence, they cannot but repent and turn unto him: And therefore so long as you continue in your sins, you may conclude your selves to be ignorant of God, and so of all things that conduce either to your present or future happiness, and consequently, that you are very fools.

2dly, THAT every sinner is a fool, is plain, in that as he knows nothing, so he can do nothing as he ought to do it. You'll all grant him to be a fool with a witness, who is not capable of any art or employment that is necessary for his livelihood and preservation: Just such a fool is every sinner; he knows not how to set his hand to any spiritual work or employment whatsoever; he knows not how to pray or hear, to meditate or examine himself. As a fool can talk to himself, so may such a one mutter out some words to himself, but he knows not how to pray to God. I do not deny but you may be cunning enough at sinning, so as to do it very artificially; even as there is never a fool in the world but hath wit enough to play the fool, so there is never a sinner but may know well enough how to act the sinner: but if he sets about any thing that is good, he does it so simply and awkwardly, that he betrays his folly in the doing of it; not being able either to begin, carry on, or finish it as he should do; and therefore for all his subtlety in other things he is a fool in the esteem of God himself, *Jer. iv. 22.*

3dly, You know a fool by his setting a high price upon things of a low value, and a low value upon things of the highest price. As he is a fool indeed, you'll say, that thinks a bead better than a pearl, and prefers a cockle-shell before a crown; such a fool is every sinner. Poor fool! he prizes a little refined earth before the pearl of price, a little gold and silver before eternal glory; the onions and garlick of *Egypt* are better to him than all the milk and honey in the land of *Canaan*. And I fear there are too many such fools among us, who prefer the toys and trifles of this lower world, before the joys and happiness that is above; who prefers their bodies before their souls; their sins before God; the worst of evils before the best of goods; earth, with all its miseries, before heaven with all its bliss and glory. O desperate madness! Egregious folly! What a strange, sottish, foolish creature is man become! That we who are designed for, and are invited to nothing less than the enjoyment of God himself, should generally spend our time, our thoughts, our parts, our whole life and strength in minding and pursuing nothing else but dreams and shadows, even worldly pelf and honours, which have no other worth but what the delusions of our own distracted fancies confer upon them!

4thly, It is plain also that every sinner is a fool, in that he makes such simple and mad bargains; which naturally follows from the former. You'll all acknowledge him to be an egregious fool indeed, that he will sell an estate for a feather, and part with a crown to purchase a pebble: I know you'll all grant such a man deserves to be begged for a fool. And yet whosoever thou art that continuest in thy sins, thou art the man: thou art such a fool as this is; for, *Esau* like, thou sellest thy birth-right for a mess of pottage, a whole kingdom for a little piece of land, God for the world, heaven for earth, all things for nothing; for nothing did I say, yea for less than nothing, for worse than nothing, for sin and misery. Instead of selling the world to gain thy soul, thou sellest thy soul to gain the world; and so dost not only sell heaven for earth, but for hell too into the bargain, and so partest with the height of happiness for the depth of misery, with everlasting bliss for eternal torments. And worse than all this too, men do not only make such foolish and ridiculous bargains as these are, but they are apt to applaud their own ingenuity in it, and to think they get a great deal by it; which is a clear demonstration that they are very much distemper'd in their brains, and have lost the true use of their sense and reason.

Lastly, A FOOL, you know, cannot betray his folly more than by being secure in the midst of danger, so as never to look before him, nor matter any evil that is falling upon him. Yet this is the plain case of every sinner; who though he stands continually upon the brink of hell, and wants nothing but God's push to throw him in, yet he is so fool-hardy, as we use to say, that he fears nothing, but thinks himself secure and safe enough. Thus the rich man in the gospel, when his barns were full of corn, his heart was at ease, and his head unconcerned for any thing that could befall him; so that he sang that pleasing *requiem* to his soul, *Soul, take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years*: But you know what he was called for his pains, in plain terms, a fool; *Thou fool, saith God, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee*, *Luke xii. 20.* How many such fools have we among us, who continuing in their sins, are every moment, subject to the wrath of this eternal God, and in continual danger of hell-fire, and yet can sleep as quietly, and live as merrily, and go on as securely in the ways of sin, as free from all cares and fears, as

if they had never heard of any such thing as death and judgment? And if these be not, I am sure there neither are, nor can be, any such creatures in the world as fools or madmen.

THAT sin therefore is the greatest folly, and every sinner, as such, a very fool, these things being considered, none can deny without betraying his own folly and want of reason.

THE next thing to be consider'd, is the *διότι*, How it comes to pass that men which were first made in the likeness of God, and so endow'd with reason, wisdom, and a clear understanding of all things necessary to make them happy, that they should become such fools, so destitute of all true wisdom and knowledge, and guilty of such egregious folly, in spiritual matters, which do so highly concern them. To which we may answer in brief, some are spiritual fools, for the same reason that others are natural fools: For why are any natural fools? but only because their brains are distemper'd and out of order; by which means their fancies or imaginations being disturbed, they have dark, false, and confused notions and conceptions of things. And upon the same account it is, that all sinners are spiritual fools; because their souls are distemper'd, their intellectuals distracted, their consciences corrupted, their reason darken'd, their wills perverted, their hearts harden'd, their affections disorder'd, all their faculties are out of tune, and so act irregularly, and contrary to their first institution: For when man by sin and disobedience fell from God his Maker, he fell as far as from heaven to earth, from the height of piety and happiness, to the depth of sin and misery; and by consequence, his fall was so great, that it turned his brains quite upside down, and so he remains in a distracted condition, and never can come to himself again, till the great God himself becomes his physician, and undertakes his cure; and by the infusion of his grace and Spirit into him, brings his soul into order again. And until God thus pours out his grace into his heart, the soul continues thus sottish, stupid, foolish, and distracted; as the fall of our first parents made it. And all sinners, so long as such, being still in their natural condition, the same wherein they were born, and which the first sin brought them into, it is no wonder that they act like themselves, that is, like foolish and distracted persons. Hence, as we usually call a fool a mere natural, that is, no wiser than he was born; so may every sinner be truly term'd a natural, one still in his natural condition, no better than when he came into the world, that is as bad as bad can be: Hence also it is that Christ is said to be the physician of souls; because it is he who cures us of this sad distemper, and sets our souls at rights again, reducing our understandings, wills, and affections, to their right order, and to their primitive frame and constitution.

AND until men be thus renew'd and recover'd to their former health and strength of mind, they are mere naturals, void of all true wisdom and understanding; and therefore it is no wonder that they play so many foolish tricks as generally they do in the world. Which being the last thing that I promised to shew, I shall demonstrate it from several instances, wherein all sinners, that is all that still continue in sin, without turning to the living God, so plainly discover their natural folly and distraction, that any one that doth but see them may know what they are by what they do.

As first, There is one piece of folly, which all mankind naturally are guilty of, and that is covetousness or desire of riches; whereby men love and long for fine houses and lands, and silver and gold, and such like things. Just as we may have sometimes seen a natural fool or idiot pleasing himself with having his pocket full of stones or dirt; or rather, as distracted persons desire swords, or such like weapons, whereby to destroy themselves; so others that have lost their senses, and the right use of their reason, nothing will serve their turn but a great deal of wealth; howsoever they come by it; and therefore go thro a thousand temptations and dangers to get it: And when they have got it, what then? Then they are in a thousand times worse condition than they were before; for now they have got a snake in their bosoms, which without a great deal of care indeed, will soon eat out their bowels; it being so difficult a matter for a rich man to be happy, or to escape misery, that our Saviour himself saith it is impossible, without the miraculous power and omnipotence of God himself, *Mat. xix. 23, 24, 25*. Hence *Agar*, being cured of his frenzy and distraction, was afraid of riches, and prayed that he might have no more than food convenient, *Prov. xxx. 8*. He was sensible that the

nature

nature of man is very weak and frail, not able to wield or manage much of this world; and therefore very wisely desired no more than what he was able to digest, as knowing that if he had more, he might surfeit on it. And yet it is strange to observe how eager men are in the pursuit of this world; they would have they do not know what; they would willingly be happy, but they do not care for any thing that conduceth to their being so; they do not care to be miserable, and yet they cannot forbear longing and labouring for such things as naturally tend to make them so: they daily pray that God would not lead them into temptations, and yet they earnestly desire to be tempted, as all rich men undoubtedly are. It is thro many temptations that they must get to heaven, if they ever come there: And yet men are generally as much desirous of wealth, as if it was all the heaven and happiness that they are capable of, yea, so far, that they desire oftentimes to have more riches rather than to enjoy what they have, always plotting and contriving how to get money, but never contriving how to use it, not knowing who shall enjoy it. This was one of the follies or vanities that *Solomon* observed in the world, and speaks of, *Eccles. ii. 18, 19*. And tell me who, but he that is a fool or mad-man, would lie down late, and rise up early, and eat the bread of carefulness and sorrow, and all for that which he never enjoys, nor makes any use of, when he hath it. Who but a fool will make such a mad bargain as to sell heaven for earth, and yet will not enjoy, nor take any comfort in what he hath gotten upon earth neither, but spend his time, his strength, his parts, his all, for he knows not what, and then leave it to he knows not whom? What a madness and folly is this! for men to be thus busy in running after shadows, thus eager in the pursuit of trifles, and when they think they have got them fast, then to let go their hold again, and want them when they have them. I believe there is none here present but have heard and seen several instances of this kind, and have called such persons fools for their pains. But have a care that yourselves be not guilty of the same folly.

2dly, DRUNKENNESS is another great piece of folly which men are commonly subject to; having not reason enough to keep the little reason which they have, but they must needs deprive themselves of that too, only to indulge their carnal appetite. And as *Solomon* saith of all things, *That they are vanity of vanities*; so this may justly be termed, *The folly of follies*: It being such a folly, that men do not only play the fool in it, but make themselves by it worse fools than they were before. For, as if their brains were not distemper'd enough before, they must needs distemper them again, and so lay themselves open to all manner of sin and folly in the world, by which means they become the derision of men, the laughing-stock of Satan, contemned by angels, abhorred by God himself, as being more like to brutes than men.

3dly, ANOTHER clear instance of the egregious folly and distraction of sinful men, may be seen in their murmuring and repining at the providences of God, being discontented, vexing and fretting themselves at what falls out in the world, as if your fretting could mend the matter, or as if you knew better how to order the world than he that made it. Silly fool! that thou shouldst thus kick against the pricks, and spurn at Omnipotence itself. When God chastiseth thee for thy sins, and lays condign punishments upon thee for thy transgressing of his righteous laws, what canst thou get by all thy fretting and tormenting thyself at it? Will he remove his rod because thou criest under it? No, mistake not thyself, he will rather continue it upon thee, until thou holdest thy peace, and learnest so much wit as to submit thyself to the wise disposal of him that made thee, and knows what is good and needful for thee, infinitely better than thou either dost or canst.

4thly, WHAT a foolish thing also is it to envy and fret at another's prosperity; for thee to make thyself miserable, because God hath made thy neighbour happy; for thee to be cast down, because he is lifted up; for thee to mourn because another rejoiceth; for thee to be troubled because another is not? As if thou hadst not misery enough of thine own, but thou must needs create thyself more; and rather than want it, thou wilt suck misery and grief out of thy neighbour's happiness and prosperity. And if there be any among you guilty of this sin, as I fear there are many, blame me not for calling you fools for it; it is no more than what *David* call'd himself; who when he had been fretting to see others in health whilst himself was sick, others at liberty whilst himself was in restraint, others at ease whilst himself had pain, others flourishing whilst himself seemed to decay in the

the world; he did no sooner consider with himself what he had done, but he presently called himself fool for it: *So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a brute before thee;* Psal. lxxiii. 22.

5thly, SWEARING also is another great folly which sinful mortals are commonly addicted to; which must certainly be acknowledg'd to be one of the greatest follies in the world; for men to ruin, destroy, and damn themselves for nothing; to take the sacred name of the most high God in vain, when they can reap neither pleasure, profit, nor honour from it. And verily, there being so little or rather nothing at all gotten by this sin or folly, I have sometimes wondered with my self what should be the reason that so many are addicted to it, and guilty of it. And all the reason that I could ever find out why men allow themselves in so unreasonable a sin as this is, is only this, they therefore indulge themselves in it, because it is a sin. Had God commanded it, they would have been naturally averse from it; but seeing God hath forbidden it, therefore are they so desperately inclined to it: So that seeing there is no other pleasure to be taken in this sin, they will therefore take pleasure in it, because it is a sin. But I wish such profane and foul-mouthed ruffians of the world, who never think they speak rhetorically enough, unless they back each word and emphasis, each sentence, with an oath; I wish, I say, they would at length bethink themselves what a foolish and ridiculous thing it is thus to offend the supreme Governour of the world, by taking his sacred name into their polluted lips in vain. But that I know no motive to drive them from this sin, but rather an encouragement to draw them to it: For was not God so much offended at it, they would not be so much delighted in it. I wish therefore they would consider, that they do not only offend God, but accuse and condemn themselves too, by every oath they swear: They condemn themselves I say for men of no credit; for persons never to be believed, unless they bring God himself to witness what they say, as being conscious to themselves that they have given the world too much cause to suspect that they always equivocate and lye, and so are not worthy to be believed without an oath. For an oath, as St. Chrysostom observes, is the bringing of a surety to witness what we say, ὥςτε πρώτη κατηγορία αὐτῇ τῷ ὀμνούντῳ; so that he that swears, first accuseth himself, to be one not worthy to be believed without a surety or witness; yea so great a one as God himself. Hence it is that St. Basil himself long ago pronounced those who are guilty of this sin to be very fools. Αἰσχρὸν γὰρ παντὶς ἢ ἀνόητον ἑαυτὸς κατηγορεῖν ὡς ἀναξίς πίστεως ἢ τὴν ἐκ τῶν ὀρκῶν ἀσφάλειαν ἐπιφέρειν. It is a very foul and foolish thing, saith he, for a man to accuse himself as one not worthy to be believed, as a man of no credit, and therefore to confirm what he saith by an oath. A foolish thing it is indeed to be one's own accuser and condemner, yet such a fool is every swearer; insomuch that I do not think my self bound to believe any thing that such a man swears: For he that will swear, be sure will lye. He that doth not fear to offend God, will much less fear to deceive men in what he saith: And therefore, altho they may fancy themselves the wits of the world, yet not only all sober men, but God himself, will repute them to be no better than the worst of fools.

6thly, AND this suggests unto me another piece of folly, and a great one too, common among men, and that is pride, haughtiness and ambition: Even for vain man to be puffed up with pride, and high towering conceits of himself, merely because it pleased the great God to lay a little bigger burden of earth upon his back than his neighbours have; for sorry dust and ashes to pride itself in his own emptiness and vanity; for a silly worm to think himself a giant, because he hath got a little larger hole or house to creep into, than his fellow-worms have: Which must needs argue a strange delirium and frenzy in them that do so. For nothing can be more certain than that all pride is both the symptom and product of a dis-tempered brain. And the only reason that can be alledged why men build such castles in the air, and erect such fools paradises to themselves, conceiting themselves to be such rare accomplished persons, is merely because they are beside themselves: And it is ordinary for madmen and fools to do so; as we may see by those sad spectacles in *Bedlam*, how they please and pride themselves in their miserable condition, conceiting the holes they lie in to be palaces, the irons they are fettered with to be chains of gold, and all that come near them to be their servants or rather subjects, themselves being no less than kings and princes in their own conceits; whereas, when they come to themselves, they find the contrary. So here, so long as a man continues in a state of sin, and so is besides himself, if he hath but a lit-

the land, he fancieth it to be a kingdom; if men do but look upon him, he thinks they admire him; if he hath but got a few fine feathers upon his back, and a little refined earth in his pocket, then he presently reckons all about him to be below him, as if he was the only person in the world to be admired by all: But when once it pleaseth the most high God to recover such a man from his distemper, to bring him to himself and his wits again, then he is presently of another mind, and finds that the former conceits which he had of himself were nothing but the delusions of his own distracted fancy; and therefore needs none to tell him that he was before a fool: as every proud man must needs be; for if he was not a fool, it would be impossible for him to be proud. If he had but so much wit as to know himself, he could not but see enough in every corner of his heart, and in every action of his life, to make him humble. And the wiser any man is, be sure the more humble he must needs be. Who was wiser than our Saviour, who was wisdom itself? and yet he was the very mirror and pattern of humility: *Learn of me*, saith he, *for I am meek and lowly*, Mat. xi. 29. And what! Shall the eternal God himself be humble, and shall vain man be proud? Shall he that inhabiteth eternity be lowly, and shall such as dwell in dirt and clay be lofty? Shall our great Creator himself vouchsafe to stoop to us, and shall we disdain to stoop to one another? This certainly is the very top of folly, the height of madness and distraction, thus to act directly contrary to infinite wisdom and prudence itself.

7tly, AND if we should farther consider the many follies that men commit in matters of religion, and in the things that immediately belong to their eternal happiness, it would be as hard to reckon how many, as it is to describe how great they are. The wise man tells us, *That fools make a mock of sin*, Prov. xiv. 9. and so we may say, *That fools make a sport of religion*. As they are the most serious about trifles, so are they most trifling in serious things; playing with religion, and making it a mere stalking-horse to catch repute and credit in the world. Hence it is there are so many fools among us, that take up with the form instead of the power of godliness, that care not how sinful they are in themselves, so they can but be accounted holy by others; and therefore palliate the most atrocious crimes under the outward garb and profession of religion; which kind of hypocrisy is certainly the highest folly imaginable, it having the greatest woes in the gospel denounc'd against it.

AND how many egregious follies are every day committed in the popish religion, where men sin against heaven, and then go to *Rome* for a pardon; offend Christ, and then ask forgiveness of the Pope; commit their sins, and then go and confess them; confess them, then go and commit them again; believe the consecrated wafer to be the very body and blood of Christ, and yet eat it all up at a mouthful, bones and all; give a penny to the poor, and think to purchase heaven by it, as if heaven was worth no more than a penny, or a penny worth as much as heaven; they say their prayers, but never pray at all, not knowing what themselves say; they will say an *ave maria* to the blessed virgin, and then think they honour God; bow to an image, and then conclude they have worshipped him whom no image can represent; abstain from flesh, and surfeit upon fish, and this they call fasting; call any one a heretick, whom they please, persecute him to death, and then think they have done God good service: and a thousand such ridiculous follies are wrought each day among them; which plainly argues them to be fanatics desperately overgrown with frenzy and distraction.

BUT we need not have gone so far to have found so much folly in matters of religion; we have too much of it, I fear, among ourselves: For how many have we among us, who being convinced of the necessity of repentance, will repent indeed, but it shall be of some sins only, not of all: whereas one sin unrepented of, will destroy us as well as a thousand, and therefore it is a foolish thing to think such a repentance will stand us in any stead. Others there are among us, who think they ought to repent, and therefore intend to do it hereafter; but still put it off, and adjourn it from day to day. Thou canst not repent now; but thou wilt repent to-morrow, or next day, or next week, or one of these days; when thou canst get time and leisure. But how well may I say to thee, as it was said to the rich man in the gospel, *Thou fool, this night may thy soul be taken from thee*. Thou dost not know but before to-morrow morning thou may'st be in another world, and there thou wilt repent indeed; but it will do thee no good. Thou wert such a fool, as not to act thy repentance when thou shouldst, and God will be so wise as not to accept of it when thou dost.

BUT

BUT time would fail me should I reckon up the several follies that sinful men are guilty of, every one of their actions being nothing else. And therefore, I shall instance only in one more great folly and vanity, which I have observed to be very common among the sons of men, there being but very few free from it; and that is, that sin is not accounted folly by us; and howsoever sinful men are, they still conceit themselves to be very wise. And I fear there are too many such among us at this time, who are not wise enough to think themselves to be fools: And therefore, altho I have shewn what a folly it is to sin, yet you cannot yet believe your sins to be your follies; but assure yourselves, that altho it be a great folly to sin, it is a far greater not to think sin to be a folly: Yea it is, certainly it is, the greatest folly in the world, not to think sin the greatest folly in the world; which, the premises consider'd, none but fools either will or can deny. And therefore, to conclude,

MEN and brethren, I have endeavour'd to shew and prove this day, that every sinner is a fool; and every sin a folly. I know there are many understanding persons among you who have heard what hath been said upon this subject; some, I hope, who are wise towards God, understanding the things that appertain to their everlasting peace: And such I am sure cannot but acknowledge the truth of what they have heard. Others, I fear, may be wise enough for the world, understanding how to manage their trades to the best advantage, and how to make a good bargain as well as the best. And such can hardly be persuaded that they are fools in any thing, because they think themselves to be wise in some things: To such my humble advice is, that you would seriously weigh what you have heard, and not suffer yourselves to be fooled into a vain conceit of your own wisdom; for assure yourselves, there is not the most ignorant person in the congregation that fears God, but is far wiser than the wisest of you that do not; for such a one's little knowledge is true wisdom, your great cunning is your real folly: And therefore, if you would manifest yourselves for the future to be wise and prudent persons indeed, lay aside your former follies, and devote yourselves wholly to the fear and service of Almighty God; for till you do so, you have not attained to the very first degree of wisdom: *For the fear of the Lord is the beginning, &c.*



S E R M O N XCIX.

The Wisdom of being Holy.

PSAL. cxl. 10.

A good Understanding have all they that do his commandments.

AS none can know God and not fear him, so neither can any one fear God aright, but he must needs endeavour at least sincerely to obey him: For he whose heart is possessed with such a sense of God's greatness, power, and glory, as makes him stand in awe and fear of him, he will not dare to do any thing wilfully which he knows will offend him, nor yet to omit any thing which he thinks will be pleasing and acceptable unto him. Hence, the fear of the Lord in scripture is usually put for the whole duty of man, for holiness or piety in general, or for the conformity of our wills and actions unto the laws and commands of God; because it is impossible that any one should fear God and yet not serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

IN this sense therefore it is that the fear of the Lord is to be understood in this place, where the psalmist saith, *That the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*; that is, a total submission of our wills to God's, and a sincere endeavour to please and obey him in all things is the beginning of wisdom: So that a man doth not so much as begin to be wise, and by consequence, is a very fool, until his mind be so enlightened, his will rectified, and his whole man so sanctified throughout, that he devotes himself wholly to the service and honour of Almighty God; for till then he remains a mere natural, no better than he came into the world, if not much worse, strangely distemper'd in his brain, distracted in his mind, and corrupt in all the faculties of his soul, and therefore he cannot but be very disorderly in his life and conversation. And hence it is that sinful men, that is, men still in their natural and sinful estate, are guilty of so many egregious follies as commonly they are not knowing to do any thing aright but sin; losing heaven to gain earth, and selling their souls to gratify their senses; admiring nothing so much as gilded dirt; and preferring it before the chiefest good; gaping after popular airs, and chusing it rather than eternal glory; kicking against the pricks, and rebelling against Majesty and Omnipotence itself; standing continually upon the very brink of the bottomless pit, and yet thinking themselves secure; and yet for all this, conceiting themselves to be wise and prudent, noble and gallant persons, as natural fools and madmen usually do; which, together with many such like ridiculous and foolish acts, so frequently committed by the sons of men, are both the clear symptoms, and ordinary products of distempered brains: And therefore it is no wonder that they are so common amongst us, most men being still beside themselves, yea all who do not truly fear God; for all such have not yet attained to the first beginning, not to the lowest degree, of wisdom, and so still remain in their natural folly and distraction, as the psalmist here signifies to us, saying, *That the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*

BUT now when a man returns to God, then he begins to come to himself, so as to become a wise, prudent, and understanding person; yea, a man of good understanding, as is here in the next place suggested to us: *A good understanding, saith he, have all they that do his commandments.*

FOR the opening of which words we must first consider what is here meant by a good understanding: For which we must know that every man naturally hath an understanding, without which he could not be a man: For the understanding is the seat and fountain of all that reason and knowledge whereby men are distinguished from brute beasts; this being that faculty of the soul whereby alone we excel mere sensitive creatures, by being capable of apprehending and discerning betwixt truth and falshood, good and evil, which other creatures cannot do. But now, by nature every man's understanding is very bad and corrupt, that being as much depraved in its apprehensions as the will is in its affections; so that it ordinarily mistaketh truth for falshood, and falshood for truth; good for evil, and evil for good; by which means it comes to pass, that men may be very subtle and cunning, and yet not wise and prudent; or, as the prophet saith, *they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge*, Jer. iv. 22. And I fear there are many such amongst our selves, who are very cunning and ingenious at driving on a bargain, very witty and jocular at censuring and backbiting others, very nimble and ready at over-reaching their neighbour, that can commit any sin as dexterously and artificially as if they had been bred up to it all their life-time, as really they were; whereas set them about any thing that is truly good, as to repent of their sins, meditate upon God, examine their own hearts, or the like; and they know no more how to do it, than as if they had never heard of any such thing before; which plainly shews, that though they have an understanding, it is but a very bad one: In contra-distinction to which bad understanding which they have that do not fear God, the psalmist here saith, *There is a good understanding in them that do his commandments*. They have not only an understanding as well as others, but it is a good one; good, not so much in respect of the act as object. Others may have a quicker understanding than they; but theirs is far better than others, because it is placed upon better objects, and so serves them to better purpose than the others do: So that by it they are able to distinguish aright between good and evil, so as to apprehend God as truly good, and evil as truly evil, which others cannot, and therefore have that woe denounced against them, *Isa. v. 20*. Hence therefore it is, that whatsoever understandings other persons may have; how great and large soever they may be; howsoever wise, discreet, and learned they may seem in their own or others eyes; so long as they do not fear God and keep his commandments, they are no better than fools and madmen in God's esteem; whereas such as are truly pious and devout, however ignorant and simple they may appear to men, though they have not so much wit to get great estates, and manage wordly businesses with that cunning and dexterity as others do; if they have but wisdom enough to serve and obey God, they are truly wise and prudent persons: Others may have greater understanding, but far worse than theirs; they may have less, but better than others; for howsoever little it is, be sure it is good. *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments: That do his commandments*; In the Hebrew it is *לכל עשיוהם* *To all that do them*; and expositors something differ in assigning the antecedent to the pronoun *Them*. The Syriack translation makes the fear of God to be the antecedent, rendering the words thus; *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding to him that doth it, that is, that feareth the Lord*. The Arabick makes the wisdom of God the antecedent, *A good understanding have all they that act by it*; that is by that wisdom which is the fear of the Lord: So the LXX. *Σύνεσις ἀγαθή πᾶσι τοῖς ποιεῖσιν αὐτήν*, *A good understanding have all they that act it*; that is, the wisdom before spoken of; upon which St. Chrysostom saith, *τοῖς ποιεῖσιν αὐτήν, τρέψι, τοῖς ποιεῖσιν τὴν σοφίαν, ἢ διὰ τῶν ἔργων ἐπιδεικνυμένοις*, *to such as do it*; that is, to such as act that wisdom, and manifest it by their works. But if I had a mind to play the critick, I might easily shew how the Hebrew pronoun being in the plural number, cannot so properly be referred to any one, as to both those antecedents, even to the fear of the Lord, and wisdom too; that the sense should be, *A good understanding have all they that are so wise as to fear the Lord*: But which way soever we take them, they will all amount to one and the same thing, and center in that exposition which our translation gives of them, even, *That they only have a good understanding that keep God's commandments*. For as he is no wise man that doth not fear God, so neither can he be said to fear God that doth not keep his commandments; fearing God and keeping his commandments being indeed equivalent and convertible terms: For that man in vain pretends to fear God that doth not obey his commandments;

where by his commandments we are to understand whatsoever the most high God hath enjoined us to do, either in his law or gospel, whether it concerns his glory immediately, or else our neighbour's good. And whereas it is said, his commandments, we are to understand it indefinitely, of one as well as another, and so of all his commandments.

THE words being thus explained present us with this plain but great truth, asserted not only by the psalmist, but God himself, That every one that truly fears God and keeps his commandments is a wise man, a man of a good understanding; though not perhaps in the esteem of silly mortals upon earth, yet in the judgment of the God of heaven, the supreme Being, the sovereign Monarch of the whole world, who doth not only assert it in my text, but elsewhere, saying, *He that keepeth the law is a wise son*, Prov. xxviii. 7. not he that knoweth, but he that keepeth the law is wise: So that one man may know more than another, and yet the other be a wiser man than he; for wisdom doth not consist so much in knowledge as in action: A man that knows much may be a fool, and he that knows but little may be a wise man; for he that knows much and doth little, his knowledge will do him more hurt than good, and therefore for all his knowledge he is but a fool; yea, the more he knows the more fool he is, because he knows what to do that he may be happy, but will not do it; he knows how to escape danger, but yet will run into it; which is certainly the highest piece of folly in the world: Whereas on the other side, tho a man knows but little, and yet does what he knows, his little knowledge will do him much good, as the other's great knowledge doth him but little good. And this, as St. Chrysostom observes, is the wisdom spoken of in my text, σοφίαν δὲ ἢ τὴν ἐν ῥήμασιν ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐν πράγμασι λέγει, *He speaks not, saith he, of wisdom in words, but of wisdom in works*; not of that wisdom whereby a man knows what to do, but of that whereby a man doth what he knows: That is true wisdom indeed; and whatsoever comes short of that, deserves not the glorious name and title of wisdom; in which sense, nothing can be more certain than that he is the only wise man, or hath a good understanding, that keepeth the commandments of God.

BUT wisdom being a thing which most pretend to, and all desire, a right understanding and thorow conviction of this great truth cannot but be very prevalent with you, to use the utmost of your endeavour to walk in all the commandments of God blameless; and seeing it is your only wisdom so to do, I shall further explain and confirm it unto you, by shewing the *ὅτι* that it is so, That he that fears God and keeps his commandments is really a wise man; and then the *διότι* or how it comes to be so; and then instancing in some particular acts wherein the wisdom of those that are truly pious discovers itself, and manifests to the world they that are the only wise men in it.

As for the first: To prove that the truly pious are the only wise men, or that they have a good understanding indeed that keep God's commandments, these arguments may be sufficient.

1. HE that fears God and keeps his commandments must needs be a very wise man, a man of a good understanding; for otherwise, as he would not fear God, so he could not keep his commandments. For he that doth not know God, be sure will never fear him. And therefore, he that fears him, must needs know him. And to know God is certainly the greatest piece of knowledge and wisdom that we can attain unto; as ignorance of him is the greatest folly that we can be guilty of. And further, as a man will not fear God, so he cannot keep his commandments, unless he hath a good understanding; there being a great deal of wisdom, discretion and understanding required to the adjusting of our actions aright to the commands of God. And therefore, it must needs follow that he is a wise man that keeps God's commandments; because, unless he was so he could not do so, he could not lead so good a life, unless he had first a good understanding. But if a man truly fears and obeys God, we cannot question but his understanding is very good, in that he understands what is truly good, and inclines his will also unto the embracement and prosecution of it; which I look upon as the best, and indeed the only sign of a good understanding. For tho a man hath never such high notions and speculations concerning good and evil, if his understanding of it doth not influence and sway his will, so as to chuse what he knows to be good, and to avoid what he knows to be evil, such a man at the best is but a knowing fool, or a foolish knowing man; because though he hath the knowledge of these things, it doth him

no good at all. But if a man gives up himself wholly to walk according to the dictates of his reason, and by consequence according to the commands of God, it is plain that such a man's understanding rules and governs his will and actions, and so that he doth not live as brutes and fools do, according as his lust and sensual appetite draw him; but as his reason and discretion dictate to him. And therefore we cannot but conclude him to be a very wise man indeed, a man of a good understanding, in that it is such an understanding as makes him a good man.

2. YOU'LL all acknowledge that it is a great part of a wise man to do the business he sets about, and to attend the end he aims at. He is a fool that never doth what he intends, nor accomplisheth what he desires. But when a man so be-
haveth himself, and manageth his affairs that he perfects what he is sent about, and conquers whatsoever he undertakes, he, you'll all say, is a truly wise and prudent man. And such a one is every pious man, that fears God and keeps his commandments; for he minds and doth the business that he came into the world about. For the great errand we were sent for, the only work we have here to do, is to glorify God, by observing and obeying his commands; by which also we attain to what we desire. For happiness is the only thing that all men naturally desire, tho some seek it in one thing, some in another: But all miss of it, but only such as fear and obey God; for all the happiness that we are capable of, consists only in his love and favour, which it is impossible for us to gain unless we obey and please him, or to miss of it if we sincerely endeavour to do so. Indeed there is unspeakable happiness in obedience itself, as the psalmist tells us, *Psal. xix. 11.* But the happiness which we shall have hereafter, if we obey God here, far exceeds our very thoughts as well as words, *1 Cor. ii. 9.* But as this is the only happiness that we can be invested with, so there is no way of attaining to it, but only by holiness, *Heb. xii. 14.* And therefore, as they cannot but be looked upon as the worst of fools and madmen, that prefer their sins before such transcendent happiness as this is, so they who fear God, and obey his commandments, and by that means in and through Christ attain to this, not only the highest, but the only happiness they can possibly be made partakers of; such, I say, must needs be acknowledged to be men of great wisdom, and a good understanding indeed.

3. TRUE wisdom discovereth itself very much in fore-seeing and preventing dangers. He is a fool with a witness, that sees misery and ruin hanging over his head, and will not endeavour to avoid it; yet such is the folly of every sinner, that he is secure and careless of himself tho he stands continually upon the brink of destruction. But he that truly fears God, and doth what he commands him, thereby prevents all the evils which foolish sinners run themselves into; he thereby avoids the wrath and displeasure of Almighty God, *who is angry with the wicked every day, Psal. vii. 11.* and so his fury and indignation is ready every moment to be poured forth upon them. And certainly, as God's love and favour is the greatest good, so is his anger the greatest evil of punishment in the world; yea, there is nothing of real evil or misery, but so far as it proceeds from the wrath of God. Crosses, reproaches, afflictions, sickness, death, these are no farther evil, than as they have a mixture of divine wrath in them; insomuch that as the greatest temporal misery with the love of God is a real blessing, so the greatest temporal blessing in the world with his wrath and indignation, is a real curse. But now this source of all miseries, this evil of all evils, such as keep God's commandments do most certainly prevent: For as there are none but sinners that God is angry with, so there is nothing but sin that he is angry for. And as they that thus sincerely obey God, avoid his wrath; so they do likewise prevent the gnawings and torments of a guilty conscience, arising only from the apprehension of God's wrath enkindled against us for our sins committed against him. For this is the portion only of their cup that offend God. For as they abuse his mercies against him, he arms their consciences against them; which accusing them of their folly and wickedness, their punishment for sin even in this life, far exceeds their pleasure in it. But now they who are truly godly, are so wise as to prevent all this misery by keeping their *consciences void of offence both to God and man, Acts xxiv. 16.* Yea, by this means also they prevent eternal misery and confusion in the world to come, hell-fire I mean, which is nothing else but the conjunction and perfection of the two insupportable evils before spoken of, as our Saviour himself intimates, *Mark ix. 44.* When the soul shall perfectly apprehend the eternal God as frowning upon it, and be as perfectly convinced of the sins which it hath foolishly com-

committed against so glorious and dreadful a Being; it is impossible to express what wracks and tortures it will then be put upon. But howsoever great these miseries are, such as truly fear and serve God, will never feel them, they being allotted only for them that do not so, *Mat. xxv. 46.* And therefore, we cannot but acknowledge such to be the only wise men in the world.

4. You may know a wise man also by his forecasting for the future, and seriously considering before-hand how to live, and be happy hereafter. It is the part of a fool, a brute, to look only to the present time; a wise man will provide for the time to come. *He that gathereth in summer, is a wise son, Prov. x. 5.* It is the part of a wise man to lay up in summer against winter, in a calm against a storm, in health against sickness, in life against death, much more in time against eternity. Thus wise are they, and they only, that fear God and keep his commandments; for whilst others throw away their time upon the impertinencies of this present world, they provide for the world to come, *by laying up for themselves treasures in heaven, Mat. vi. 20.*

5. THE principal thing whereby to know a wise man from a fool is his choice; when of two evils he chuseth the least, and of two goods the best. This must needs argue a good understanding, able to discern betwixt good and evil, as also betwixt the greater and the lesser good. A sinner is such a fool that he counts good evil, and evil good; puts light for darkness, and darkness for light. But he that fears God is so wise as always to chuse the better part, *Luke x. 42.* He chuseth heaven before earth, holiness before sin, the love and favour of God before all things in the world besides: And so he chuseth the more noble, the more pleasant, the more profitable, the more honest, the more necessary, the more lasting, and by consequence, the better part of the two; yea, the best of all. As *Moses* did to the children of *Israel, Deut. xxx. 19.* so doth God set before you all life and death, happiness and misery; life and happiness, if you obey his commands; death and misery, if you do not. Now such as keep his commandments, are so wise as to chuse the life and happiness for themselves, and leave death and misery for such fools as all sinners are, to undergo. And therefore, all things consider'd, all that have any understanding among you, must needs grant that they only have a good understanding that fear and obey God.

THE next question to be resolved, is, How it comes to pass that they that fear God and keep his commandments, so far excell others in true wisdom, and a good understanding.

THE reasons are,

1. BECAUSE such as truly fear God are come to themselves again; they are recovered from their former madness and distraction, to the right use of their senses and reason, which sinners are not: So long as a man remains in his natural condition, or until he return to God, his fancy is so disturbed, his mind distracted, and all his intellectuals so strangely broken, and out of order, that every thing is represented to him to be of a quite different nature from what it is in itself. He can see nothing of good in God himself, nothing of sinfulness in sin; yea he oft-times fancies to himself a great deal of good in evil, and of evil in good; happiness in sin, and misery in holiness. Hence the apostle saith, *That the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, 1 Cor. ii. 14.* That is, he is so far from looking upon the wisdom of God as wisdom, that he reckons it to be but foolishness; so far from reckoning the foolishness of sin to be foolishness, that he looks upon it as wisdom; so far from thinking good to be good, and evil, evil, that he judges good to be evil, and evil good. And therefore it is no wonder if he be a fool, seeing he looks upon it as his wisdom to be so; no wonder if he be so bad, seeing he reckons it his goodness to be so. But now, when God intends to work over a soul unto him, he dispels these dark shades of ignorance and error from off the face of the soul, and clears up its understanding, shewing it the goodness of God, and the sinfulness of sin; so that the soul is now able to discern betwixt the one and the other. Yea this is the first act which God passeth upon the soul, in order to its conversion, whereby it is so enlightened, that it soon discovers its former folly and madness, and so it begins to come to itself again, and is able to consider and weigh things in the ballance of right reason. And the mind being thus recovered from its former distemper, it is now able to pass a sound judgment upon every thing that is presented to it; so that

now it apprehends God as an all-glorious, incomprehensible and almighty Being, and therefore it cannot but fear and dread him: It apprehends the commandments of God to be infinitely just and righteous, and therefore it cannot but endeavour at least sincerely to observe and keep them. And the mind of such as do so, being thus composed and restored to its proper frame and constitution, they cannot but have a right and good understanding, and so become really and truly wise.

2. As by our returning unto God, and so coming to our selves, we are made so wise as to be both able and willing to keep the commandments of God: So by our keeping the commandments, we every day may more and more increase our wisdom, and better our understanding; not only because the more we accustom our selves to regulate our actions according to the laws of God, the better we shall be instructed and enabled to do that wherein our principal wisdom doth consist; but especially, because if we faithfully and constantly endeavour to fear and obey God, in what he commands, he will teach us wisdom, and make known himself and his laws more and more unto us; and so clear up, and better our understandings in what is necessary for us to know and do. *I understand more than the ancients, saith David, because I keep thy commandments, Psal. cxix. 100. And thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, ver. 98.* So that God by his commandments doth teach men wisdom, and makes them that keep them wiser than other people. Yea, the commandments themselves, by the grace of God, help towards the refining of our knowledge, and the bettering our understandings. *The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes, Psal. xix. 7, 8.* So that although a man be not of that quick understanding as some are in the laws of God, if he doth but sincerely endeavour to keep them as well as he can, God will enable him to know better what to do, as well as to do that better which he knows. To this purpose is that gracious promise of our blessed Saviour, *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest my self to him, John xiv. 21.* That is, he that loveth me so as to keep my commandments, I will so love him, as to manifest my self unto him, acquaint him with my will and pleasure, and so make him wise unto salvation, directing him in the way that leadeth to everlasting life. And therefore, 'tis no wonder that he that keepeth the commandments is wise, seeing wisdom itself hath promised to make him so, by unveiling and manifesting itself unto him. This therefore is the great and principal reason, why they that fear God are so wise, and so far exceed all others in prudence and understanding; even because they are instructed by God and Christ himself, who is the fountain and source from whence all true wisdom and good understanding flow.

AND that you may the better understand how wise all those are who are truly holy, who fear and obey God, I shall, in the last place, instance in some of those acts, wherein they shew forth that wisdom which they have received from above, and manifest to the world that they are the only men of a good understanding who keep the commandments of God. Indeed there is nothing which God hath commanded, but it is our wisdom to perform it; as considering that obedience to the laws that he hath enjoined us, is indispensibly necessary to the obtaining of the happiness which he hath promised us. Howsoever that you may pass the better judgment upon all the rest, I shall instance only in some of those particular graces and virtues which it is our wisdom to act, and exercise our selves continually in, that you may all be convinced that it is your wisdom as well as duty to fear God and keep his commands.

FIRST therefore, As it is God's most gracious command, so it is our great wisdom to repent, that is to be thoroughly humbled for, resolved against, and converted from those sins which we have heretofore allowed and indulged our selves in. For seeing sin is the only cause of evil, if it be our wisdom to repent of evil, it must needs be our wisdom to repent of sin; repenting of sin being the only way whereby it is possible for us to avoid the evil and punishments which are due unto it. *The heart of the wise, saith Solomon, is in the house of mourning, Eccles. vii. 4.* It is the trick of a fool to take pleasure in sin, but it is the part of a wise man to be sorry for it; yea, so to be sorry for it, as sincerely and constantly to endeavour to forsake and leave it. For tell me, Is it not your wisdom to agree with your adversary in the way? Is it not your wisdom to get God reconciled to you, and your selves reconciled

ciled to him? Is it not your wisdom to get out of the road to hell, and to turn into the narrow path that leads to heaven? Is it not your wisdom to refuse the evil, and chuse the good, to avoid the misery, and embrace the happiness which is set before you? If you have but so much wit as to know what it is to be wise, you cannot but acknowledge those to be great acts of wisdom. And yet there is never a one of them can possibly be done without repentance; it being absolutely impossible either to please God here, or enjoy him hereafter, to escape hell torments, or attain to the joys of heaven without repentance. And therefore, let the vain and foolish world say what it will, the truly humble and penitent is the only wise and prudent man.

To believe in Jesus Christ, so as to trust and depend upon him, and him alone, for pardon, acceptance and salvation; this is so great an act of wisdom, that we can do nothing wisely without it: For we can have no wisdom but what we receive from Christ; neither can we receive any from him, but by believing him; who is therefore said to be made our wisdom as well as our righteousness, *1 Cor. i. 30.* because we are made wise by him, as well as accepted of as righteous in him. Hence, when the *Galatians* began to stagger and err from the faith of Christ, thinking to be justified by the works of the law, *St. Paul* calls them fools and madmen for their pains. *O foolish Galatians, saith he, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you? Gal. ii. 21. ch. iii. 1, 2.* Who hath bewitched you? implying, that they which think to be justified or saved by their own obedience and good works, are certainly bewitched and seduced by some lying spirit or other. For no man in his right wits can possibly think that his future obedience can satisfy for his former sins, and that a few weak performances upon earth could merit eternal glory. These are fond conceits, and such as no sober and prudent person will be ever persuaded to entertain; especially, considering that we have now a certain and infallible way found out, whereby never a soul of us but may attain to the pardon of our sins, and the eternal salvation of our immortal souls, and that is by the faith in Jesus Christ; *who is able to save to the utmost all those that come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 25.* And tell me, seeing there is but one way whereby you can go to God and be saved, Is it not your wisdom to walk in it? Seeing there is but one Redeemer of mankind that can deliver you from sin and hell, is it not your wisdom to haste to him? Seeing there is but one city of refuge, in all the world, which can defend you from your pursuits of divine wrath, is it not your wisdom to haste thither? Seeing there is but one physician that can cure you of your spiritual distempers, is it not your wisdom to go to him? Seeing there is but one Advocate in the court of heaven that can plead your cause at the throne of grace, is it not your wisdom to retain him? Seeing there is but one sure rock in all the world, that can keep you from sinking into the bottomless ocean, the abyss of misery, is it not your wisdom to anchor your hope on him; In a word, *Seeing there is no name given under heaven whereby you can be saved, but the name of Christ, Acts iv. 12.* and yet, seeing there is no way neither of being saved by him, but by believing in him, is it not then your wisdom to lay hold upon him, to believe in him, and obey his gospel? What is, if this be not wisdom?

3. HUMILITY also is another especial instance of true wisdom; when a man is low and humble in his own esteem, how high soever he be in others. For this argues that a man hath a good understanding, he is acquainted with his own heart, he knows how vile and sinful he is, and therefore cannot but be humble in his own sight. And questionless, it is as great a piece of wisdom to be humble, as it is a folly to be proud and haughty. If I see a man proud, I am presently apt to suspect him to be a fool, one that doth not know himself, that knows not how much sin, venom and corruption is within him. For if he saw it, he could not but abhor himself, and be humbled under it. An heathen poet, *Persius* by name, could say, *Tecum habita & nosces quam sit tibi curta supellex:* Live at home, live with thy self, look into thy own heart, and thou shalt soon see how little thou hast to be proud of; or rather, how much thou hast to be humbled for. For what hast thou to be proud of? Art thou proud of thy wisdom? If thou hast any thou couldst not be proud: *Seest thou a man wise in his own eyes? saith Solomon, there is more hopes of a fool than of him, Prov. xxvi. 12.* So that he that thinks himself wise, is a fool; yea, he is therefore a fool, because he thinks himself wise. Art thou proud of the strength of thy body, or the greatness of thy estate? Thus saith wisdom itself, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; let not the strong man glory in his strength; let not the rich man*

man glory in his riches; Jer. ix. 23. And verily, a horse hath as much cause to be proud of his trappings or burden, as any man hath to be proud of any thing he hath or can have here below. And therefore, whatsoever our outward condition be, how great soever our gifts and parts, yea, how strong soever our graces and virtues are, it is still our wisdom to be humble in our own eyes, and to live as those who believe that great truth, that we can never think too highly of God, nor too lowly of our selves.

4. ANOTHER great piece of wisdom, whereby they that truly fear God manifest themselves to have a good understanding indeed, is charity, or a free and liberal distribution of what we have our selves, to such as want it. For this is the way to make unto our selves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, Luke xvi. 9. This is the way to enrich ourselves by relieving others. Neither is there any other way in the world to be rich, and to improve our estates but this. For what we have is not our own, but only God lends it to us to lay out for him; but what we give is our own, for we lend it to God to lay it up for us. *He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again,* Prov. xix. 17. So that what I have is God's; but what I give is mine own. For I have lent it to God, and have his word for it, that he will pay it to me again; which is infinitely surer than all the bonds in the world. And so, when God lends an estate to us, we are his debtors for it; but when we give any thing to the poor, God acknowledgeth himself our debtor for that. And therefore, what we keep we cannot call ours, because we owe it unto God; but what we give, we may call our own; because God owes it to us, having bound himself by his promise, that he will pay us it again. To this purpose I have met with an excellent passage in St. Chrysostom, *Why therefore, saith he, dost thou deprive thyself of those things which God would have thee to possess; for he hath therefore commanded thee to give to another, that thou thyself mightiest have it,* ἕως γὰρ μόνον κατέχεις ἃ δὲ αὐτὸς ἔχεις, ὅταν ᾗ ἐτέρω δῶς τότε καὶ αὐτὸς ἔλαβες, *so long as thyself keepest it, not so much as thyself hath it; but when thou givest it to another, then thou receivest it to thyself.* So that what we keep, that we want; what we give, that we have; for at the same time that we give it to another, we receive it our selves. And this is laying up for our selves treasures in heaven, by laying out for God the treasures that we have upon earth; which being the only good use that we can possibly make of what we have, it must needs be acknowledged a great piece of wisdom thus to employ what God hath entrusted with us to our own advantage.

5. THE wisdom of those who are truly righteous appears also in the resignation of their wills to God's. As we see wisdom itself did, in our blessed Saviour, who could say, *Not my will, but thine be done.* And verily, thus to resign our wills to God's, so as to have no wills as it were of our own, but to submit our selves wholly to be guided by the will of God, is as high an act of wisdom as it is possible for us to exert; for by this means, we may always have our wills, because they are the same with God's; which is always done. Nay, when we have thus given our wills to God's, so as to entrust him always to will for us; all providences whatsoever are, in effect, by the acts of our own wills, with this extraordinary advantage, that they are guided and directed by the infinite wisdom and goodness of God. And as it is the wisdom of a patient to let the physician chuse what dyet, physick, and the like, he must have, so it is much more our wisdom thus to entrust God to chuse for us, and to be well pleased with his choice, tho never so cross to our sinful desires; because we cannot but acknowledge that he knows infinitely better than our selves what is good or hurtful for us; especially, considering also that by this means we may make a virtue of necessity. For God's will be sure must be done, whether we will or no; and therefore it is madness in us to resist or gainsay it, and our greatest wisdom wholly to submit our selves unto it, and always to acquiesce contented in it.

THUS I might shew all other acts of true piety whatsoever, that it is our wisdom to perform them; and that the truly pious manifest themselves to be the only wise men, by every act of obedience which they perform to the commandments of God. For what? Doth wisdom teach you to live happily in the world? Then the godly are the only wise men yet; who often retire to the vexatious bustles and tumults of this distracting world, that they may fix and unite their hearts to draw nigh to God, and enjoy communion with the chiefest good, the fountain of all true happiness. Doth wisdom teach you to prefer the good before the evil? Then they

they that fear God are wise in chusing the greatest suffering rather than the least sin; there being more real evil in the least sin than in the greatest suffering imaginable. Doth wisdom teach you to consult your books to see what others owe to you and you to others, that you may know your outward estate and condition? How much wiser are the godly who oft examine themselves and consider how the case stands betwixt God and their souls? Is it your wisdom to have a care of yourselves, and not to run headlong into ruin and perdition? Then there is none so wise as the godly, who are always watchful over themselves, and careful to avoid sin, the only cause of all their misery. Is it your wisdom to do that well which you can do but once, and which can never be mended, if it be once ill done? Then certainly they that truly fear God must carry away the palm for wisdom from all the world besides; for they are always ready to die, and so to do that well which they can never do again. They were the foolish virgins which wanted it; the wise had oil in their lamps, true grace in their hearts, and so were ready when the bridegroom came; and therefore they entred into the bride chamber, when the others were shut out, and with all their importunities could never after be admitted to come in.

BUT what need I instance in any more particulars? These may be sufficient to demonstrate that the fear of the Lord, or true holiness, is the *ראשית*, both the beginning and the end of true wisdom; having proved unto you that sinners so long as such are meer fools, not having attained so far as to the first beginning of wisdom; and that saints, so far as such, are truly wise. All which I have endeavoured to explain with that clearness and perspicuity, that none of you that have any understanding at all but must needs confess, that they only have a good understanding that fear God and keep his commandments. And therefore, I hope you have all prevented me in what I intended for the application of this truth; which was to advise and stir you up to do that which you cannot but be now convinced is not only your duty and interest, but your wisdom too to do; even to devote yourselves for the future wholly to the service of Almighty God, to fear, honour and obey him: For I cannot persuade myself but you all desire to act like wise men. This I am sure of, you all either are or would be accounted wise: But assure yourselves, whatsoever your condition be in this world, howsoever cunning and subtile you may be in the management of worldly affairs, whatsoever conceits you may have of yourselves, whatsoever opinion others may entertain of you, yet in the judgment of wise men, and of the all-wise God himself, you neither are nor can be truly wise untill you be truly good. And therefore, if any of you desire, as I hope you all do, to manifest your selves to be sober and discreet, wise and prudent men and women, take this course to do it; break off your former sins by repentance, and shewing mercy to the poor, and believe in Christ for pardon and salvation, love God's person and obey his precepts, trust on his promises, and fear his threatnings, sanctify his sabbaths, and reverence his name, be loyal to your sovereign, and obedient to magistrates, be faithful to your friends, and loving to your enemies, kind and charitable, just and equitable unto all: In a word, fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man, and his wisdom too, *Dan. xii. 3.*



S E R M O N C.

The Pleasure of being Holy.

PROV. iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her paths are Peace.

MAN being at first made capable of the greatest pleasures that it was possible for a creature to be instated in, and likewise instated in all the pleasures that his nature was capable of, although by his fall in *Adam* he lost and forfeited the actual possession of them, yet his capacity still remaining, he cannot but be restless and unquiet until it be filled again, and his soul be restored to the enjoyment of the same pleasures which it was before endowed with. Hence it comes to pass that all men in the world desire pleasures, and therefore are still seeking after something or other to delight themselves in; but it is strange to consider what low and pitiful things they that are fallen men take up with instead of pleasure. Some please themselves with running after the beasts of the field; others with pursuing the fowls of the air; others again with ensnaring the fishes of the sea; some take pleasure in solitude and retirements, others in the crowds and bustles of the world; some take pleasure in running over the histories of former ages, others in censuring the transactions of the present times; some delight in stretching their brains with high metaphysical notions, others can even surfeit themselves upon the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration; some hug themselves with the thoughts of their temporalestates, others are even transported at the smiles of an earthly prince vouchsafed to them; some take pleasure in lust and luxury, others in drunkenness and gluttony. Indeed there is no act a man can do, no object that a man can meet with, nor no sin that a man can commit, but some or other takes pleasure in it: which clearly shews that men will take pleasure in any thing rather than nothing; and that pleasure is a thing that all men desire, insomuch that they will rather do violence to their very natures, and stoop so low as to be fellow-commoners with the beasts that perish in their brutish and sensual pleasures, rather than have no pleasure at all.

AND I suppose there are none here present can be exempted from the common estate and condition of all mankind in this particular, but that you as others, are all desirous of pleasures and delight in the world, and you cannot be blamed for it, for it is that you were all designed to have; and therefore it cannot but be lawful for you to endeavour after it. But the question is, What the true pleasure is, and how it may be attained; for nothing can be more certain, than that those things which mankind are generally delighted in, cannot afford them any real pleasure at all, be sure not such as was at first appointed for them: For they are much below so high and noble a creature as man is, to content or please himself with: And therefore it must needs concern us all in a very high manner to search into the true nature of pleasure and to consider wherein it may be had. But for this we have just cause to suspect our own judgments, because we have found by our own woful experience that they have often failed us already, and have passed the sentence of pleasure upon such things as we have found to bring misery and torment along with them; or at the best have frustrated our expectation in affording us no solid and real satisfaction at all, in the enjoyment of them. And therefore waving our own judgments,

ments, we must consult some or other who understands our temper and constitution so well as to know better than our selves what is, and what is not pleasant and delightful to us: but that none can do but God, who having made us at first, and still preserving us by his Almighty power, he cannot but be thoroughly acquainted with the frame and disposition of our bodies, as likewise with the tendency and inclinations of our souls, and by consequence, understand wherein our happiness and pleasure doth consist, infinitely better than our selves can do. To him therefore let us appeal, and resolve to submit to his judgment in the case, which we cannot but acknowledge to be beyond exception. But how shall we come to know, what he that made us, judges to be most satisfactory and pleasant to us? For that we need go no farther than the words I have now read, wherein he hath delivered his opinion in the case as clearly as words could do it, saying, *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, &c.* The meaning whereof in general is, That the exercise of true grace and virtue, doth really afford the souls of men more solid peace and pleasure, than all things else in the world can do.

BUT that I may explain these words more clearly, and convince you more fully of this great truth contained in them, I shall,

I. CONSIDER who, or what it is, whose ways are here said to be *ways of pleasantness*.

II. WHAT we are to understand by her ways, which are here asserted to be *Ways of pleasantness*; and wherein they appear to be so.

III. WHEREIN it is that her ways exceed all other things in *Pleasantness and peace*.

THE first thing to be considered, is, who, or what it is, of whom it is here said that *Her ways are ways of pleasantness*. But that we may easily gather from the context; for the wise man inspired by the Holy Ghost, is here speaking of wisdom, *ver. 13*. But then the principal question is, What the wise man understands by wisdom, in this and other places of this book, wherein it so frequently occurs. To which I answer, That by wisdom all along in this book of *Proverbs*, the wise man means such a knowledge and sense of God, as makes us continually to fear and dread him, as is plain from *ch. i. 29. ch. iii. 7. ch. xv. 33. So doth Job, ch. xxviii. 28. And David, Psal. cxi. 10. So also Prov. i. 7. ch. ix. 10.* Nothing therefore can be more plain, than that by wisdom we are to understand *the fear of the Lord*, even such a fear of him whereby we avoid whatsoever is offensive to him, and perform whatsoever is required or commanded by him, *Prov. viii. 13. ch. xvi. 6.* For indeed the fear of the Lord in scripture, is not only now and then, but almost every where put for the whole duty of man, for that which we call in general godliness: Inasmuch, that in all the old testament, yea and in the language wherein it was written, as I remember, there is never a word ever used for godliness but *יְהוָה יִרְאֶה* and *יִרְאָה*, *The fear of God*, and *the fear of the Lord*, and the like. And in the new testament, wheresoever the word *εὐσεβεία*, *godliness*, is used; in the language our Saviour spake, it is always rendered by *φόβος τοῦ θεοῦ*, *the fear of God*: So that wheresoever you read of the fear of God in scripture, by it you are to understand not only that particular grace or act whereby we reverence and dread the eternal God, but likewise that excellent habit or disposition of the mind, whereby we are ready to perform universal obedience to all his laws and commands, or if you will, that which in other places of scripture is called godliness: and the reason is, because the true fear of God always qualifies and tempers the mind so, that a man dare not but please and obey God in every thing he doth, to the utmost of his knowledge and power.

THIS therefore is that wisdom and understanding which the wise man here means, even such wisdom whereby a man so knows God as to fear him, and so fears God as to honour and obey him in all things. This is that wisdom which is here commended to us by God himself as the most blessed, the most excellent, the most precious, the most profitable, and the most incomparable thing we can ever desire or have, *ver. 13, 14, 15, 16.* And that we may be assured that there is pleasure as well as profit to be had in knowing and serving God; he further adds, that *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

WHERE the next thing to be searched into, is, what we are here to understand by the ways and paths of wisdom, or true piety, which are here asserted to be so pleasant and peaceable.

FOR which we must know first in general, that godliness being the means whereby we may attain eternal salvation by the merits of Jesus Christ, hence it is called *the way of salvation*, Acts xvi. 17. and *the way to life*, Mat. vii. 14. and *the way of God*, Acts xviii. 26. because it is the way wherein God would have us walk, as being chalked out for us by himself in his holy word. And as the habit of godliness in general is called *the way of God*, so are the several acts of piety called his ways too, Deut. viii. 6. ch. x. 12. And as they are called the *ways of God*, so they are termed here *the ways of godliness*, because they are such ways as true godliness prescribes and directs a man to walk in, through the whole course of his life. Thus therefore reading and hearing of the word of God, praying unto him, receiving of his blessed sacraments, meditating upon him, loving of him, longing for him, trusting on him, rejoycing in him, and obeying him; in being just and faithful, charitable and merciful, kind and loving to one another; and all other acts whatsoever of true grace and virtue, wherein a man truly pious can exercise himself, they are all but the several ways of wisdom or piety, which are here asserted to be not only pleasant and peaceable, but pleasantness and peace itself.

BUT this I fear many of you may think to be such as several others of Solomon's *proverbs* seem to be, even a mere riddle or paradox; which, though it may perhaps be true, yet you can hardly believe it to be so, not being able to imagine how so strict and devout a life as true wisdom and holiness requires, should afford such extraordinary peace and pleasure to the soul, as is here asserted to be in it. And therefore to convince you of this great truth, that the performance of these several duties, and the exercise of these several graces which are here called *the ways of wisdom*, doth really afford true peace and pleasure, true comfort and satisfaction to the souls of men: To convince you of this, I say, is the work which this text requires me to undertake, howsoever hard and difficult it may seem to be. And if you will but seriously consider what I shall deliver upon this subject, and weigh it in the balance of right and unbiass'd reason, I do not fear but by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, I shall convince you all effectually of it.

BUT in order thereunto, you must give me leave to premise two things: First, That the wise man here asserts the ways of wisdom, to be not only *the ways of pleasantness*, but likewise *the paths of peace*; that is, they are quiet and peaceable, as well as pleasant and delightful to the soul. Some ways may be pleasant, which yet are unsafe and dangerous; others may be safe and without danger, but yet unpleasant to such as walk in them. But the ways of wisdom have both those excellent properties, *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*: which adds very much to the pleasantness of them; peace in the idiom of the scripture, comprehending under it all manner of safety, welfare and prosperity that can be desir'd, which always attending the pleasures and delights of holy actions, must needs make them as pleasant and delightful, as it is possible for actions to be. The other thing I would premise, is, That when I speak of pleasure, you must not expect any philosophical definition or description of it: For it is a thing that you may better experience in yourselves, than I am able to express it to you. Neither indeed need I tell you what it is, for you all know well enough when a thing is pleasing to you, and how your minds are affected with it; which affection of the mind with that which is good, and so pleasing to us, is that which we call pleasure, whereby we rest satisfied in the enjoyment of some either real or seeming good.

BUT certainly he must be a great stranger to the exercise of true piety and virtue, that is not so affected with it, as to take a great deal of pleasure and delight in it, there being nothing that can afford so much joy and satisfaction to the soul as that doth: which, that I may demonstrate to you, I shall first instance in such common duties, which wisdom or true piety puts men continually upon; and shew you what extraordinary pleasure they who are real saints take in them.

I. READING the word of God, is one of those ways of wisdom which wise and good men often walk in; and could you but see how their hearts are affected whilst they read them, you would need no other argument to persuade you it is a pleasant and delightful work: For the scriptures are the word, the oracles of God himself; and therefore, they who are truly godly, cannot but find extraordinary joy and comfort in reading and consulting of them. For there they meet with the will and pleasure of God revealed to them, and with the glorious properties and perfections of God unveiled before them: There they meet with all the promises which he hath made to mankind in Jesus Christ, yea, with all things whatsoever they

they desire to know : For here they may learn both how to serve God here, and to enjoy him hereafter, which are the only things a good man desires to know. And they who are truly such, cannot but be strangely affected in the reading of the scriptures, yea, even transported with the heavenly and divine expressions they meet with there. And that they are so, is plain from the example of *David*; how sweet, how pleasant, was the word of God to him? *Psal.* cxix. 103. and xix. 9, 10. and cxix. 14. And every godly man being of the same temper and disposition as *David* was, he cannot but find as much joy and comfort in the word of God as *David* did; who therefore describes a good man, by *his delighting*, as he did, *in the law of God*, *Pf.* i. 2.

2. PRAYING and praising God, are ways of piety and pleasure too : For by prayer they who are truly pious, converse with God himself, with an humble confidence, that whatsoever they ask in Christ's name they shall receive, which must needs afford them more joy and comfort, than any one is able to conceive but they that have it; especially praising of him being always joined with praying to him, which is so high, so holy, so heavenly a work, so agreeable to the nature of saints, that it cannot but raise their spirits to the highest pitch of joy and pleasure, as it did *David's*, *Psal.* lxiii. 4, 5. Yea, this is the work which the very glorified saints in heaven make their constant business and recreation, *Rev.* iv. 9, 10, 11.

3. FREQUENTING of the publick ordinances, to present our selves together in a solemn and reverend manner before the eternal God, to implore his mercy, to magnify his name, to hear his word, and to perform our homage and devotion: Who is able to express the pleasure which the truly pious take in it? How did *David* rejoice to go to the house of God, *Psal.* cxxii. 1. How did he grieve when by reason of his banishment he was deprived of this mercy? *Psal.* xlii. 1, 2, 3, 4. How did he envy the very birds that could go nearer to God's altar than himself? *Psal.* lxxxiv. 1, 2, 3, 4. How doth he beg to be restored to his former liberty, that he might freely go to the house of God again? *Psal.* xliii. 2, 3. preferring it before all other joys, *Psal.* lxxxiv. 10. And questionless, all those who are holy as *David* was, cannot but find the same delight in worshiping and adoring God as he did, they cannot but find these ways of wisdom to be *the ways of pleasantness and peace*.

4. MEDITATING upon God and Christ, upon heaven, and the glories of the world to come, is a duty no less pleasant than profitable to the saints of God : For by this means they have their conversation always in heaven, there solacing their souls in the contemplation of divine perfections. As the lustful man is delighted with beholding of earthly beauty, and the covetous with his worldly riches, so, and much more, he that is heavenly and godly, must needs be delighted with meditating upon God and heaven, objects agreeable to his temper and constitution: in so much, that we may boldly say, that there is no pleasure like to his who always dwells in heaven, conversing with those transcendent beauties, glories, and perfections that are there. This is that which *David* found so sweet and pleasant to his soul, *Psal.* civ. 33, 34.

5. RECEIVING the sacrament of the Lord's supper; this you cannot but acknowledge to be the highest refreshment that a true saint can ever attain to in this life : For here we eat and drink the mystical body and blood of Christ, feed upon angels food, the bread of life that came down from heaven, *Joh.* vi. 35, 55, 56. Here we sit down with Christ himself at his own table, and have nothing less than all the merits of his death and passions displayed and set before us, which true saints cannot but account to be the best banquet, the most pleasant feast that they ever were or can be invited to in this world. And if the duties which wisdom requires to be performed, afford so much comfort and delight to them that duly perform 'em, what then shall we think of the pleasures which a good man taketh in the exercise of all true grace and virtue? What shall we think of it? Why, that it is certainly far greater than we are able to think it, for no man can conceive it but he that hath it. But that you may understand something of it, I desire you to consider the true nature of piety; that it consisteth in the right temper and disposition of the mind, reducing all its powers and faculties into their proper frame and constitution; so that it may be justly termed the health and soundness of the soul, as all vices are diseases and distempers in it. And therefore as an healthful and sound body is not only free from pains and aches, but all its natural motions are pleasing and delightful to it; so is it with the pious soul, all pious and virtuous actions being agreeable to its nature, the exerting of them cannot but be very grateful and pleasant

pleasant unto it. As when such a soul exerciseth itself in loving of God, and longing after him, in trusting on him, and rejoicing in him, and the like; such acts as these are the natural products of that grace and virtue which is sown in the heart: So that the man would do violence to his renewed nature, if he should not exert them; and therefore he cannot but take extraordinary delight in the exerting or acting of them. The same may be said of all other graces and virtues whatsoever, as faith, humility, self-denial, temperance, patience, truth, faithfulness, justice, meekness, charity, and whatsoever else it is that the hearts and lives of true saints are adorned withal: For such acts as these flowing naturally from a pious soul, renewed and assisted always by the grace of God, they cannot but always carry a secret kind of pleasure and delight along with them, which none can perceive, much less partake of, but the soul from whence they flow.

BUT besides this agreeableness that there is betwixt all acts of piety and pious souls, he that sincerely performeth those duties, and exerciseth those graces which God requires, thereby enjoys peace of conscience, even unspeakable joy and satisfaction in his mind, arising from the sense and consideration that he hath done his duty, and so that God is pleased with him: For the apprehension of God's love and favour is certainly the greatest pleasure and happiness that men or angels are capable of. But according to our obedience to God's laws, so generally is our sense of his love to us; if we have sincerely endeavoured to observe whatsoever he hath commanded, we have just grounds to hope for Christ's sake, he will accept of us, and is well pleased with us; which must needs affect us with extraordinary joy and comfort, as it did St. Paul, 2 Cor. i. 12. And this is that which none of you but may often experience in your selves: For when you have been conscious to your selves of some wilful and notorious sin, have not your consciences often flown in your faces, and raised storms and tempests in your breasts, ready to sink you every moment into horror and despair? And so also on the other side, when you have faithfully discharged your duties, and kept your consciences void of offence towards God and man, have you not then found your consciences clear, your minds serene, and your whole souls transported into pleasure and satisfaction, at the apprehension and remembrance of it? I know you have, for so it is with them that walk only by the light of nature, Rom. ii. 14, 15. And if it be so with them, how much more with such as are guided by the light of the gospel, and assisted with the principles of true grace? Their blessed souls must needs be affected with extraordinary joy and comfort at the sense of their serving and pleasing God; especially considering that every pious man hath firm and sure ground whereupon to build the hopes of his acceptance with God, even the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, which he stedfastly believes in, and relies continually upon, as having the word of God himself for it, that what he sincerely endeavours to do, is acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And whosoever believes this, as be sure every pious man doth, he cannot but take unspeakable delight in obeying God, because he believeth that for Christ's sake God is pleased with what he doth, and accepts of it as well as if it was every way as perfect and exact as the law itself requires it should be; which is certainly so great, so high a comfort, that they who experience it in themselves, can never be able to express it to others, 1 Pet. i. 8.

THUS therefore you see what peace and pleasure there is in the ways of wisdom, even in the several acts of piety, which they who are truly godly, continually exercise themselves in. The last thing I promised to shew you, is, wherein the pleasures which they enjoy, who constantly serve and obey God, do far exceed all the sensual delights of this world; wherein I shall endeavour to demonstrate to you, that they who devote themselves wholly to the service of God, live the most pleasant and comfortable lives of any men in the world; yea, that they are the only men that know what pleasure and comfort means, and by consequence, that the ways of wisdom are not only the ways of pleasantness, but the only ways of pleasantness that it is possible for any of you to walk in.

FOR first of all, other pleasures only tickle the senses, and delight the fancies of men, and so have no other being or existence in the world, but what our deluded imaginations give them: Abstract your fancy from all things here below, and what will then become of your pleasure in them? How soon will it vanish into smoke and vapours, yea into vanity and vexation of spirit? Think gold dirt, and it is so; think the pomp and glory of this world to be a mere dream and shadow, and it is so; think lust and luxury, drunkenness and gluttony, to be

bestly and brutish fooleries, and they are so: For those are things that fools and madmen, yea the brute beasts themselves, take as much seeming pleasure in, as the soberest and learnedst men can do; and therefore we should never fancy any thing of pleasure in such things as these are, were not our imaginations so fearfully corrupted and depraved, as to present every thing in a wrong shape, and under false colours to us: For we are all men, rational creatures, made after the image of God, endowed with spiritual and immortal souls, as well as with frail and corruptible bodies; and therefore it cannot in reason be imagined but that far other and higher delights were designed for us, than such as brute beasts themselves partake of as well as we.

BUT the pleasures which the saints enjoy are quite of another nature; they are not seated in the body or senses, but the soul itself is the subject of them; and all its powers and faculties are affected and delighted with them. And therefore our Saviour, to distinguish them from all other pleasures, calls them the rest or happiness of our souls, *Mat. xi. 28, 29.* The things of this world may something ease and refresh our bodies, but they cannot reach the soul at all, so as to afford it any thing of comfort and satisfaction; and therefore it was a foolish thing for the rich man in the gospel to say to his soul, *Take thine ease*, because his worldly goods were increased, as you see he did, *Luke xii. 17, 18, 19.* But you know who called him fool for his pains, even no less a person than the great God himself, *ver. 20.* He was a fool indeed that thought his earthly riches could give ease to his soul; no, none but Christ can e'er do that, neither doth he ever do it to any but the truly pious. They may say indeed to their souls, souls, take your ease, for you have goods, real, spiritual, and eternal goods laid up for you, not only for many years, but for ever and ever. But this is more than any one else can say, and therefore they must be acknowledged to be the only persons that enjoy true peace and pleasure in the world, such peace and pleasure as becomes a man, a Christian, a saint to solace and delight himself continually in, the soul itself being the proper and immediate subject of it, as *David* himself found, *Psal. xciv. 29.*

2. As the pleasures which arise from piety exceed all others in the subject, so do they in the object too; whatsoever sensitive pleasures men enjoy, they are no more nor greater, nor better than what the silly creatures upon earth can afford them; they look no higher than this lower world, and if they can make a shift to pick up something that looks like pleasure in it, they are beholden to the very inanimate and senseless creatures for it. Thus the covetous man takes pleasure in refined dirt, the epicure in meats and drinks, the vain glorious man in empty titles of honour, and every one, but he that is sincerely pious, can find no other pleasure in the world but what he is forced to fetch from sensible and terrestrial objects, as being the only things that he converseth with, although they were never intended to make men happy.

BUT it is not so with the sons of wisdom, with those who are born again and so become the children of the Most High. They feed not like swine upon the husks of this lower world, but have their heads and hearts continually taken up with the contemplation and enjoyment of the chiefest good, the eternal God himself; or at least, with longing and thirsting after him, and with rejoicing at every intimation that they have of his love and kindness to them: So that he that is the only center of all perfections is the only object of their joy and pleasure. *The light of his countenance*, that is, the manifestation of his grace and mercy to them, is the only good that they desire or rejoice in, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.* Hence such as are truly wise and godly, disdaining to converse with nothing else but dirt and clay, as silly mortals upon earth do, *their conversation is in heaven*, *Phil. iii. 20.* There are all the wealth and treasures, the joys and pleasures that are the objects of their desires; and therefore their thoughts and affections are always there, *Col. iii. 2.* And as there is nothing upon earth, so neither is there any thing in heaven but God, which they desire or rejoice in, *Psal. lxxiii. 25.* All the world, the whole creation, is nothing to a godly man; the eternal God, the Creator himself, is the portion of their cup and the lot of their inheritance: He is their hope and help, their joy and desire, their light and love, their strength and tower, their wealth and riches, their sun, their shield, and their exceeding great reward; he is their all, their more than all, their God. And seeing this the supreme and universal Being of the world is the only object of a saint's delight, the ways of wisdom must needs be acknowledged to surpass all other ways in pleasantness and peace, as much as heaven doth earth, and the infinite Creator all finite creatures.

3. THE pleasures which saints enjoy, exceed all others in their properties: For,

1. THEY are true and solid, pure and unmix'd pleasures; which cannot be said of the sensual delights of this world, which are always ushered in, attended, and followed with grief and troubles; they are no pleasures until some preceding pain or sorrow makes them so: And as they begin, so they go on and end with sadness, as *Solomon* himself, that made as much trial of them as ever man did, found by his own experience, and therefore hath expressly asserted it, *Prov. xiv. 13.* But it is not so with the godly; their joys are real and substantial, pure and sincere joys, without any mixture or alloy of trouble with them, *Prov. x. 22.* Their joys depend not upon the constitution of their bodies, but the right disposition of their minds, which being always preserved in a due temper, their pleasures are not subject to such changes and vicissitudes as others are, but their hearts are always fixed, trusting upon God, *Psal. cxii. 7.* Hence also,

2. THEY are firm and constant pleasures, not like the uncertain delights of sinful men which ebb and flow with the stream of worldly prosperity, and depend altogether upon the unconstant smiles of fortune in this world: They are merry and jolly while they prosper, but let them be but deprived of any part of their estates, crossed in their relations or designs, or howsoever let them but be laid upon a sick bed, and then all their pleasure's gone, nothing they have can afford them any comfort or relief, but their thoughts trouble them, and every thing seems sad and sorrowful to them. No, the pleasures of piety are not such as these; they are not taken from any sublunary objects, and therefore do not encrease or wain with them: But the good man is as chearful when the world frowns as when it smiles upon him; howsoever the world goes with him, it is all one to him, he is still the same; tho he lose all things here below, he loseth nothing of his joy; for that was placed only upon God before, and so it is still, *Hab. iii. 17.* So that in the midst of all his thoughts within him, the comforts of God still rejoice and delight his soul, *Psal. xciv. 19.* Yea, tho he be upon his sick, his death-bed, his comfort still remains; his sickness cannot be so painful and tormenting to his body, but the testimony of a good conscience is still as pleasing and supporting to his soul, *Isa. xxxviii. 3.*

3. THE pleasures of the righteous are full and satisfying. The things of this world are all so vain and empty, that whatsoever men fancy, they can never be satisfied with them, *Eccles. i. 8.* And the reason is, because the soul is capable of more than all this world; and therefore his desires being as large as his capacities, can never be satisfied with any thing, or all things in it: But the godly man drinks continually at the fountain-head: The inexhaustible fountain of all true joy and happiness, God himself, is the only object of his delight, in whom he cannot but rest fully satisfied, being not able to desire more than he hath in him, *Psal. xvii. 15.* *Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3.*

4. The pleasures of this world are but sensual and brutish, no better than the very beasts themselves enjoy as well as you: But the joys of the godly are angelical and divine; such joys as the cherubims and seraphims, the angels and archangels enjoy in heaven; yea, such as God himself enjoys: For what does he rejoice in but himself, and what do they rejoice in but only him? *Phil. iv. 4.* And therefore, if you would know what joys there are in heaven, you must look into a saint's breast, there you may see them represented as clearly as they can be in this world; but you cannot read or understand them, unless yourselves be the saints ye look into.

5. THE pleasures of this life, they are at the best but the pleasures of this life; when this life is ended you must leave them all, so as never to return to them again; but instead of present pleasures and delights, you'll have grief and sorrow, pain and torment, misery and desolation for evermore: But it is not so with the joys of saints; they are begun in this life, and perfected in the life to come, so as to continue in their lustre and beauty, in their height and perfection unto all eternity, *Psal. xvi. 11.* Neither will they only last for ever, but that the saints shall know and be assured of too, which will be a great addition to them; for the very thoughts of losing those pleasures, as you must lose yours, would damp all the comfort they take in them: But no fear of that; no, they are not such pleasures as time can consume, or eternity itself diminish; but he that enjoys them once, will be certain to enjoy them for ever.

THUS

THUS now you see that the ways of wisdom are not only the ways of pleasantness, but of such pleasantness that no other pleasures in the world can either surpass or equalize it. From whence observe,

1. THE great mistakes that are in the world concerning piety, as if it was a melancholy and disconsolate course of life; whereas it is plain, that no persons in the world enjoy such pleasures as the godly do, nay none enjoy any true pleasure at all but they: They are the only spiritual *Dives's* that fare deliciously every day, the rest of mankind being altogether unacquainted with true joy and comfort, true peace and pleasure, because they walk not in the ways of wisdom.

2. HENCE see the folly and madness of sinful men, who embrace the shadow for the substance, and take up with seeming instead of real joys: They are always thirsting after pleasure, but can never be satisfied with it, until they be sanctified and made truly holy. And therefore as ever you desire to lead chearful and comfortable, pleasant and happy lives, either in this world, or that which is to come, without any more ado, consecrate your selves to God, and make it your business to please him; walk continually in the ways of wisdom, performing your duty both to God and man: And then you'll have pleasure indeed; such pleasure as the world can neither give nor take from you; such pleasure as will refresh your minds, comfort your hearts, support your spirits, rejoice your souls in all conditions, and so make you happy both now and for ever.

S E R M O N C I.

The Advantages of being Holy.

I TIM. iv. 8.

For bodily Exercise profiteth little: But Godliness is profitable unto all things.

WELL might the prophet say, *The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* For who ever yet could fathom the bottom of his own heart; or thoroughly understand what himself would have? Who ever yet was acquainted with all the concavities and secret recesses that are in his own breast, so as really to know himself? Or, who ever yet could say, that his heart was faithful to him, or that he was faithful to himself? Certainly very few, if ever any; as might easily be demonstrated from the strange paradoxical and self-contradicting actions, that men do generally commit. They believe there is a God, and yet they will not strive to serve him; they look for a future judgment, and yet they will not prepare for it; they know there is a hell to punish sinners, and yet they will be sinners still; they hope to go to heaven when they die, and yet will not look after it while they live; they condemn sin, and yet they will commit it; they commend holiness, and yet they will not practise it: Nay, for all that men desire to be

be happy, and know there is no other way to be so, but by being holy, yet it is the hardest matter in the world to persuade them to be, or to live holy: Insomuch that altho we come unto you in the name of God, exhort, sollicite, advise and charge you, time after time, to devote yourselves, and all you have, to the service and honour of Almighty God; and although you cannot but in your consciences acknowledge, that it is both your duty and interest to do so, yet you will not be prevail'd upon to do it, only because you will not: So desperately wicked, deceitful and perverse is the heart of man become, that nothing but omnipotence itself is able to affect or move it.

HOWSOEVER, seeing it is by the ministry of his word, that God is pleased to draw off your hearts from sin, and to incline them effectually to himself; whether you will be faithful to yourselves or no, we are bound to be faithful to you, and to use all means imaginable, which, by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, may any ways conduce to the making you in love with piety, and seriously to endeavour after the practise of it. And amongst the many means that may be us'd to this end, I know none more probable to effect it, than to represent holiness to you under the notion of such things as you are most apt to be taken withal. But there are three things especially which all mankind are affected with, and very much desire, pleasures, honours, and profit. Not to insist upon the other now, profit is a thing that all look after; for none would be poor that can be rich, and how much soever a man hath, he is still willing, if not desirous, to have more. This is that which makes some dig into the bowels of the earth, and others to dive into the bottom of the sea to find it. This is that which keeps some at home, and sends others abroad to look after it. This is that which confines some to their shops, and makes others trudge about the world, encompassing both sea and land to search for it. Indeed profit is the universal engine of the world, that draws mens hearts and affections, yea both their souls and bodies, which way soever it turns. Whatsoever it is wherein any thing of gain or advantage is to be had, no man but would willingly be a sharer in it: Insomuch that could I direct you to a way wherein you might all infallibly double your estates in this world, I dare say, there is none of you but would thankfully embrace the motion, and prosecute it with all your might and main; and that by reason of the natural desire that is in all mankind of having and enjoying much. And verily, although I cannot pretend to be so cunning and ingenious as yourselves are, to find out ways how to encrease your temporal estates, and to manage them for the best advantage in this world; yet I dare assure and promise you in the presence of Almighty God, that I can direct you to such a course of life as will be really profitable and advantageous for you. And that is, to devote yourselves wholly to the service and honour of God, or to live godly and religious lives, by which you may certainly get not only much more than you have, but as much as you can possibly desire. For this way of living would bring you in a constant income of true and lasting riches; there being nothing that you can in reason or justice desire, but by this means you may undoubtedly gain it to yourselves. But because you may not think me a competent judge in matters of gain or profit, I shall wave my own judgment in the case, and appeal to him, whose judgment is beyond exception, even to the All-wise God himself, who cannot but be acknowledged to understand infinitely better than you and I do, what is and what is not good and profitable for us. And if you consult his judgment and opinion concerning it, you need not go far to find it; for he hath plainly and expressly declared it to you, by his holy apostle, in the words I have now read, *For bodily exercise* &c. which words did you but clearly understand and firmly believe what is contained in them, you would not need any other arguments to persuade you to use the best of your endeavours after godliness. And therefore I shall endeavour to give you the full meaning and purport of them; and shew you likewise what just grounds you have really and firmly to believe the truth asserted in them.

HERE therefore, First, by bodily exercise we are to understand such exercises of the body as are wont to be undertaken by some upon a religious account, as abstinence from some kinds of meats, from wines, from marriage, and the like; wherein many in the primitive, yea even in the apostolick times, as well as now, placed a great part of their religion, for it is of such kind of bodily exercises that the apostle is here treating, *ver 1, 2, 3, 4*. Now such bodily exercise, if it be not observed upon right grounds, and kept within its proper limits, as, if meats be ab-

strained from as unlawful, and marriage as in itself detestable, as some of old did, then before it becomes both sinful and dangerous, as the apostle intimates, *Col. ii. 22.* But if it be undertaken only as an act of self-denial, out of a desire to keep the body under, and to make no provision for the flesh, then it may be somewhat acceptable unto God, as carrying along with it a shew of piety, *Col. ii. 23.* And therefore, such kind of bodily exercise may be, yea is, *ωφέλιμος πρὸς ὀλίγον*, *profitable for a little*, or as we here render it, *it profiteth little*, that is, there is something of profit in it, at least for some time, as some expound the words, *πρὸς ὀλίγον*, *for a little time*; a notable instance whereof we have in *Ahab*, *1 Kings xxi. 27, 28, 29.*

BUT whatsoever profit we may reap from such bodily exercises, be sure it is little or nothing in comparison of the great advantages which accrue unto us by real and universal piety: *For bodily exercise*, saith he, *profiteth little, but godliness is profitable for all things*; that is *ωφέλιμος πρὸς ὀλίγον*, this *πρὸς πάντα*, *that is profitable for some things, this for all things whatsoever*; which you'll all acknowledge to be a large encomium, of godliness, and that which must needs render it very acceptable unto all men, all men being ready to catch at every thing that will bring them in any profit, much more surely at that which is profitable for all things: Insomuch that I am willing to persuade myself, that hearing of these words you cannot but be very desirous to know both what this godliness is, which is here asserted to be so profitable a thing, and likewise how it appears to be so; both which I shall endeavour to explain unto you.

As for the first, What godliness is: In few terms, it is nothing else but the rectitude, or right temperament and disposition of the whole man, every faculty of the soul, and member of the body, being reduced into its primitive conformity to the laws and commands of God: So that as the sun, moon, and stars, and all other inanimate creatures, keep the stations, observe the motions, and act according to the rules which were at first prescribed them; so he that is truly godly, all his thoughts, his words, and actions, move regularly, according to the will of the first mover, the supreme Being of the world, still keeping themselves within the bounds that he hath set, and discharging the several offices and duties which he that made them did at first enjoin them. And therefore it doth not exert and manifest itself only in some few particular acts of our life, but in the devotion of ourselves, and our lives, wholly unto him in whom we live. To this agrees the description which *St. Basil* gives of holiness or sanctification, *Ἀγιασμός ἐστι τὸ ἀνακεῖσθαι τῷ ἁγίῳ θεῷ ἐξ ὁλοκλήρου*, *Holiness is the devoting of ourselves wholly to the most holy God*, sincerely studying and endeavouring at all times to do those things which are pleasing and acceptable unto him; which notion of godliness is imported also in the word here used by the Holy Ghost for it: For what we render godliness, in the original is *εὐσέβεια*, which properly signifies the right worshipping of God, which consisteth principally in testifying our acknowledgment of his power and authority over us, by conforming our lives and actions wholly to his revealed will and pleasure. And hence it is too, that we call it godliness, or likeness to God, because by this means we are in our capacity and degree, *holy as he is holy, in all manner of conversation*. Therefore is that godliness which the apostle here speaks of, even such an excellent temper and constitution of the mind, whereby we serve and honour, please and obey God to the utmost of our power, in every thing we set our hands, our heads or hearts about. This is that godliness which is here said to be profitable for all things; which is the next thing to be consider'd.

WHAT it is for a thing to be profitable, I need not tell you; for you all understand well enough that you reckon a thing to be profitable, when it conduceth or helpeth towards your getting something that is good and advantageous for you; in which sense godliness is here said to be profitable, not only for some or many, or most, but for all things whatsoever; because it is the way whereby we may attain to all things whatsoever that are or can be necessary, convenient or any ways good for us; so that as your trades and callings in the world are profitable to many of you, as to some things, because they bring you in much worldly gain or profit, the thing you so much covet; so godliness is profitable for all things, because by it, you may gain all things you can in reason desire or wish for, either in this life or that which is to come: For, indeed, all good things whatsoever are promised to it, which is the reason the apostle here brings for this his assertion, *That Godliness is profitable for all things*, because it hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

WHERE we may observe, First, the strong foundation that the apostle lays his assertion upon, grounding it upon nothing less than the promise of God, which is certainly not only the surest, but the only ground that we either have, or can have, to believe that any thing shall be profitable to us, it being the promise of Omnipotence itself, of him that rules and disposeth of all things in the world; he hath said and promised that godliness shall be profitable to you, but not that any thing else shall be so: He never promised you that you should thrive in your trades or callings: He never promised you that your projects and designs in the world should prove successful; or that the care and pains you take should stand you in any stead; if it doth, it is more than you could promise your selves, for it is more than God ever promised to you: But he hath promised all good things whatsoever can be desired to godliness, yea, and hath sealed his promise too with the blood of his Son, 2 Cor. i. 20. And the promises he hath made to it, are both for this life and that which is to come, and so godliness is profitable for all things in both.

1. As for this life. It is certain that godliness answers all the concerns of it, and is profitable to all things in it. But because this is a thing that you'll not be easily persuaded of, I shall further explain and demonstrate it to you, and prove that godliness, even in this life, is not only more profitable than any thing else, but itself is profitable to all things; for you'll all grant me, that that which conduceth to the getting of estates before you have them, to the keeping of them when you have got them, to the enjoyment of them while you keep them, and to the improvement of them while you enjoy them; and will profit you also in all things else wherein your estates can be no way serviceable to you; you'll all grant, I say, that this must needs be profitable unto all things, but such is godliness: For,

1. IT is profitable as to the getting of estates in this life, such estates especially as are most convenient and necessary for every man to have; for it secures to a man a sufficient maintenance and subsistence in this life, as firmly as truth and Omnipotence itself can do it, *Matt. vi. 33.* So that he that takes care to please and obey God, need take care of nothing else, for God himself will take care of all things else for him. And besides that, godliness hath the blessing of God always attending it, which is the only thing that maketh rich, *Prov. x. 22.* And that God's blessing shall always go along with godliness, is expressly promised by God himself, *Deut. xxviii. 1, 2, 3, 4.* So that he that is godly is sure to be provided for; he is sure to have as much in this world as is good and advantageous for him, which is far more than any other man either is, or can be. Nay, godliness in itself conduceth much to the getting wealth and riches even in this life, because it brings a man into that credit and repute in the world, that all men will strive to deal with him, who deals truly and faithfully with all men, as be sure every godly man doth. Howsoever, this is certain, that they who are truly godly shall never want any good thing, for God himself hath passed his word for that, *Psal. xxxiv. 9, 10. lxxxiv. 11.* and therefore, so far as any thing in this world is good for them, they are sure to have it: So that godliness is profitable for the getting of all the real good, or good things of this life.

2. So it is too for the keeping of them when gotten, not only because it always moderates a man's affections, so that he'll be sure to live within the compass of his estate, and not squander it away upon lust and luxury, *Luke xv. 13, 14.* but likewise, because God himself hath engaged to provide for him, and therefore to preserve what he hath given him for that purpose, which he certainly will do for all that trust in him, *Psal. xxxvii. 3, 23, 24, 25. Dan. vi. 23. Jer. xxxix. 17, 18.*

3. GODLINESS conduceth much also to the right enjoyment of what we have. A wicked man often wants what he hath, *Eccles. vi. 2.* whereas a good man always enjoys what he hath, *Eccles. v. 18, 19.* and oftentimes what he hath not too, taking a great deal of pleasure and contentment, not only in his own, but in others estates too, rejoicing in the goodness of God, that is so bountiful to others as well as himself, *Rom. xii. 15.*

4. AND if you speak of improving your estates, nothing doubtless conduceth so much to that as godliness; for it will teach you how to manage every thing you have for the best advantage: It will teach you how to make friends of the unrighteous mammon, *Luke xvi. 9.* how to return your estates into the other world, *Mat. vi. 20.* and how, even in this life, to receive an hundred for one, (*Job iii.* compared with *Job xlii. 12.* He had two for one,) interest for all you have, *Mat. xix. 29. Mark x. 30.* And

And therefore godliness must needs be acknowledged to be a very profitable thing indeed.

5. WHERE riches can stand you in no stead at all, there too godliness will be profitable to you: For riches profit not in the day of wrath, but so doth godliness, *Prov. xi. 4. Ezek. vii. 19. Psal. xlix. 16, 17.* Riches cannot profit you when you come to lie upon your death-bed, but so can godliness, *Isa. xxxviii. 1, 2, 3.* Riches while you have them cannot afford any contentment or satisfaction to you, but the more you have of them, the more thirsty you'll still be after them: But godliness always breeds contempt and so becomes great gain, *1 Tim. vi. 6.* Riches can never free your hearts from cares and fears, but so doth godliness; it makes a man take no thought for this life, *Mat. vi. 25.* It makes a man repose his trust wholly upon God, and to depend on him for all things necessary both for life and godliness; so that all things considered, the good man is the only rich man even in this life: He hath all things he desires, for he desires nothing but what he hath: Tho he may want something which others have, be sure he wants nothing that is good for him; for he hath one thing which is not only better than all things else, but profitable for all things too, even true godliness, which whosoever is endowed with, hath all things secured to him, both in this life, and that which is to come.

Thus therefore, had we nothing else to mind but the concerns and affairs of this life, yet godliness must needs be acknowledged to be the most profitable and beneficial way of living that any one can possibly take to, as having the promise of all good things even for this life, both made and confirmed to it by him that cannot lye. Indeed, though there was no such thing as a promise made unto it, yet godliness, even of itself, in its own nature, may justly be accounted not only profitable, but profit itself, the greatest gain, the surest riches, the most real wealth that even in this life we can ever be possessed of: For it keeps a man's mind continually in such an excellent frame and temper, that doth not only answer all the ends of other riches, but makes him infinitely more happy than all the riches in this world can do: For it raises a mans thoughts and affections so far above the world, that he is never concerned or affected with any thing that happens in it to the grief and disturbance of others; but whatsoever storms and tempests arise without him, he hath still calmness and tranquillity, peace and assured confidence within. Hence it is that God himself gives the name of riches to the several acts of holiness: For the godly man is said to be *rich towards God*, *Luke xii. 21.* for he is *rich in faith*, *James ii. 5.* and *rich in good works*, *1 Tim. vi. 18.* So he may be said to be rich in love towards God, rich in charity, rich in sobriety, rich in heavenly mindedness, rich in humility, rich in all true grace and virtue whatsoever. These are the true riches indeed; and let me have such riches as these are, and do you take the riches of this world: I'll assure you I shall never envy you for them, but rather pity you as poor and beggarly creatures, naked and destitute of every thing that is really good for you, and necessary to make you happy; whereas he that is truly godly, is certainly as happy as it is possible for a creature to be in this world, and all because he is godly: So that should we look no farther than this life, godliness must needs be acknowledged to be profitable for all things in it.

BUT why do I speak so much of this short, this transient, this uncertain life we lead in this world, when godliness hath the promise not only of this life, but likewise of that which is to come, which as far exceeds this life as light doth darkness, or heaven earth: For here by the life to come, we are to understand all the joys and glories of heaven, which are promised to true godliness or piety, as is plain from the whole tenour both of the law and gospel; yea, so plain, that I need not undertake to prove it to you, there being none of you, I am confident, that doubt of it; but that if you be godly here, you shall live in heaven, and be happy for ever. But the principal thing I am here to do, is to possess you with such a sense of the joys of heaven, and of the excellency of that happiness which is there promised to the godly, that you may all for the future be fully persuaded of this great truth, that you will gain infinitely more by being godly, than you can by any other way of living whatsoever; or that the profit which by the mercies of God, and the merits of Jesus Christ, you will receive, if you be truly pious, doth far exceed all the wealth and riches which you can ever attain to in this life: Which I shall endeavour to do by comparing the riches which the godly enjoy in

the life to come, with those which you have, or labour for in this; or rather by shewing that there is no comparison at all betwixt them. For,

1st, THE profit which we shall receive by godliness is true and real, which cannot be said of the wealth and riches of this world, which have no real being in themselves, nor any other existence, but what they receive from the delusion of mens distracted fancies: For gold and silver, for example, are no further riches than as they are thought to be so; and were not our thoughts and imaginations corrupted and deceived, we should never have put the name of riches upon them; as you may easily gather from the apprehensions that glorify'd saints and angels have of them: For their judgments and opinions of things being always true and perfect, they can find nothing of real profit or excellency in one piece of dirt more than in another, altho it may shine a little more gloriously in the eyes of deluded mortals. Hence our Saviour himself makes earthly riches to have no other subsistence but only in mens thoughts or fancies, *Luke viii. 10.* Yea, *Solomon* makes them to have no being at all, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* Not as if those things which are accounted riches had no real existence in themselves, but that they have no existence at all in the proper notion of riches, or they are not riches properly so called, but are only thought or fancied to be so by deluded mortals, who give the name of riches to houses, and lands, and money, and such like things, which cannot in themselves profit, or do them any good; and therefore are very falsely called riches or goods: And yet these are all the riches that all your care and pains, your cunning and industry for this world can bring you.

BUT now the profit that occurs by godliness is quite of another nature; it is real profit, true wealth, substantial riches indeed, such as make the owners rich in the eye of angels, yea of God himself: For godliness entitles a man to every thing imaginable that can any ways conduce to make him happy; it gains an interest in God, and in all the perfections of the divine nature, an interest in Christ, and in all the merits of his death and passion, an interest in the Holy Ghost, and in all the graces and comforts that flow from him: What is, if this be not, true profit indeed, thus to be interested in him who is all things in himself? What are all the riches of this world, if compared with these? What if you can say, such houses are my houses, such lands are my lands, such wares, such money, or such bonds are mine? What is this to a man that can say, God is mine, his mercies are mine to pardon me, his wisdom is mine to direct me, his power is mine to protect me, his grace is mine to make me holy, and all his perfections are mine to make me happy, *Psal. cxliv. 15.* for he is my God? Of such a one I would say, Behold a rich man indeed; one that hath thriven so well in the world, that he hath got more than the whole world it self is able to afford him; one that wants nothing, nothing that is necessary, nothing that is good, nothing that is or can be any ways profitable or advantageous for him, because he hath and enjoys God, in whom all things desirable are concentrated. Yet thus rich and wealthy is every truly good and godly man; he is entitled to all these glorious things even in this life, and in the life to come, and hath actual possession of them, and all because he is a godly man, one that fears God, and keeps his commandments, and believes in Jesus Christ for pardon and acceptance, according to the tenour and purport of the gospel; and therefore they who are truly godly, must needs be acknowledged not only to be rich men, but to be the only rich men in the world, in comparison of whom no one else can be called rich, whatsoever outward enjoyments he may possess: For theirs are real and substantial riches, his nothing but dreams and fancies, clouds and shadows, the mere chimeras of his own distracted brain.

2^{dly}, THE profit that comes by godliness is full and satisfying, which the riches of this world are not; for they are not only vain and empty, but even vanity and emptiness it self: So *Solomon*, you know, calls all things here below, *Eccles. i. 2.* And who ever yet was satisfied with vanity? No, no surely; satisfaction is a thing that this world never did, nor can afford to a rational soul, which is able to desire infinitely more than all things in this world, and therefore we may be confident that nothing in this world is able to satisfy its desires: Nay, it is to be observed that the things of this world are so far from satisfying our desires, that the more we have of them, the less we are generally satisfied with them; but the more we have, the more we crave, our desires still running *in infinitum*, and by consequence never resting satisfied until we come to the enjoyment of the infinite God, which we can never come to without godliness, which is the only way

that leads to the enjoyment of this infinite good, in whom alone our infinite desires can be ever satisfy'd: For godliness hath the promise not only of this, but also of the life to come, which consisteth wholly in the vision and fruition of God, the center wherein all infinite perfections meet; and therefore it is profitable for the obtaining of such riches, more than which it is impossible for us to desire; which therefore whosoever hath, his desires cannot but be fully terminated, and his soul rest fully satisfied in what he hath. But whosoever is truly godly, is thus fully rich; not in silver or gold, not in houses or lands, but in God himself the chiefest, the infinite, the all, the only good, *in whose presence is fulness of joy*, Psal. xvi. 11. inasmuch that tho all things in this world are not able to fill and satisfy one soul, he of himself is able to fill and satisfy all the souls in the whole world, as he will do those who are truly godly in the life to come, Psal. xvii. 15. Oh the glory, the happiness, the riches of a glorified saint! How full, how excellent, how infinite is the wealth that he hath gotten by being holy, in and thro the merits of Jesus Christ! seeing he hath as much, not only as he doth, but as he can desire, yea, and infinitely more too; the riches that he enjoys as far exceeding his desires, as the wealth of this world comes short of ours. How then are we able to forbear breaking forth into that pathetical expression, Psal. xlii. 1.

3dly, THE riches which godliness in and thro Christ produceth, are sure and constant; they are not like the riches of this world, which make themselves wings and fly away, Prov. xxiii. 5. They do not ebb and flow as all those sublunary riches do, which never continue in one stay; but he that is rich to day, may be as poor to morrow; and he that is poor to day, may be as rich to morrow, and as poor again the day following, so uncertain and unconstant are all things here below: But so are not the riches that are above; they never fail nor diminish in the least: No, there are no bankrupts in heaven; he that is once admitted a citizen of the *New Jerusalem*, there is no fear of his ever breaking, nor of his sustaining any losses or crosses either by sea or land; for all things are made as sure and firm to him as Omnipotence itself could make them: neither have those blessed souls any mixture of grief or trouble in the bliss and happiness they there enjoy, Rev. xxi. 4. They are never interrupted or hindered in the enjoyment of what they have, but they constantly enjoy their spiritual estates with joy and satisfaction to the full; neither do they only enjoy them fully when they have them, but they always have them fully to enjoy.

4thly, And that is the fourth thing wherein the profit that ariseth from godliness, infinitely surpasseth all the riches of this life, and so are more uncertain than life itself; for you are never sure of them while you live, and you are sure to part with them when you die, Luke xii. 20. Thus the rich man hath fared sumptuously every day, when he is once dead, the next news we hear of him, is, that the man is in hell, and hath not so much as a drop of water to cool his enflamed tongue, Luke xvi. 19, 20, 24. How many such *Dives's* are there in the world, who whilst they are here, are accounted rich and wealthy, or to speak in your own dialect, able men, but when they go out of the world, they leave all they have behind them, which others presently fall a scrambling for, whilst themselves are ingulph'd in misery and torment, no way able to help themselves. But it is not so with those that are rich towards God: As their estates will never be taken from them, so neither will they be taken from their estates. No, no fear of that, once in hell, and for ever in hell, and once in heaven, and for ever in heaven. There are no leases for any terms of years there; every thing they have, as what have they not, is firmly settled upon them for ever; every one hath his life in his estate, and that *an immortal and an eternal life*, Mat. xxv. 46. Every one hath *an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. i. 4. Every one hath his mansion house, and that *eternal in the heavens*, 2 Cor. v. 1. Every one *hath his fill of pleasures, and that for evermore*, Psal. xvi. 11. So infinitely doth the profit that comes by godliness exceed the fading and impertinent riches of this transient world.

BUT should I undertake to discourse so fully upon this subject, as to shew you every thing wherein the wealth of the godly surpasseth all other riches, my discourse must be like the subject, infinite and eternal. And therefore I shall instance only in one more particular wherein the extraordinary profitableness of godliness may be easily seen, and that is, that by it a man may certainly and intallibly attain to the riches we have now been speaking of; which is infinitely more than can be said of the things of this life: For it is possible for a man to use all the

art and cunning that ever man used to get earthly wealth and riches, and yet go without it when all is done. This many have found by their own experience, who could never attain to any considerable estate, do what they could, but after all their care and pains, and trouble, they have still been as poor and indigent as ever. But it is not so with heavenly riches, which godliness is profitable for; for never a soul of you but may most certainly attain to them, that will but use the best of his endeavours to live in all godliness and honesty: not by any virtue that is in godliness itself, as if that could merit such transcendent riches as these are, but by reason of the promise which is made to it, both for this life and that which is to come; which promise being made by God himself, who cannot lye, it cannot but be faithfully and exactly performed, especially considering that it is sealed and confirmed too by the blood of Jesus, who came into the world and died on purpose that they who believe and obey him, and so are godly persons, *might have everlasting life*, John iii. 14, 15, 16. Heb. vii. 25. 1 John v. 10, 11. So that we have the word, the testimony, the word of God himself, that if we be truly godly, we shall have eternal life in Jesus Christ; from whence we may confidently assert, that no true saint ever missed of heaven, or that true godliness never yet was, or never can be unsuccessful or unprofitable to any, but that wheresoever it is, it is always profitable for all things.

THUS now you see what godliness is good for, and how profitable a thing it is to all that sincerely follow after it, it being the only way whereby you may every one attain to true and real, to full and satisfying, to firm and constant, to eternal and everlasting riches, and that as certainly and infallibly, as if you were already in the actual possession of them. Go to now, all ye who admire and covet riches, and see if you can find out any better way of thriving in the world than by serving God; if you can, follow it with all your might and main. Go to now, ye that think it not worth your while to devote yourselves wholly to the service of God, that say as they did in *Job*, ch. xxi. 15. and in the prophet *Malachi*, ch. iii. 14. Consider what you have heard, and then tell me whether you have any cause to say so or no; or rather, whether you have not all the cause in the world to believe that the heavenly is the most profitable calling you can be of, and that there is more real advantage got by serving God, than there is by all other artifices, designs and practices whatsoever: and therefore be advised to act accordingly for the future. I know you all desire to be rich, yea, to be much richer than you are, and it is my hearty desire and prayer to Almighty God, that you may be so too: But I am sure you can never be truly rich, unless you be truly pious; and that all your care and pains about other things will stand you in no stead, nor bring any real profit at all unto you: but if you sincerely follow after godliness, you will infallibly find that to be profitable for all things you can desire; for God himself hath said it is so, and therefore all such amongst you as are so wise as to prefer God's judgment before their own, as ever ye desire to be rich indeed, take this course: Call in for all your thoughts and affections from this world, and fix them only upon God; set yourselves in good earnest to honour and obey him in all things you think, or speak, or do, firmly believing and trusting on Jesus Christ, for the acceptance of your persons and performances; and then you'll be rich indeed, both in this life and that which is to come.



S E R M O N CII.

The exemplary Holiness of the primitive Christians.

ACTS ii. 42.

And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine, and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers.

HAVING this opportunity of preaching the word of God to you, I heartily wish that I could do it so effectually, that by his blessing upon it, ye may all be the better for it, both in this life and the next: For otherwise my preaching will be in vain, and your hearing also will be in vain; and so it always will be, unless when you hear the word, you receive it, as the *Thessalonians* did, *not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*, 1 Thes. ii. 13. In them who do not believe it hath no effect at all, but it works effectually upon all that do by the Holy Spirit of God working together with it, and setting it home upon their hearts and consciences; as we see in this chapter, where we find that by one short sermon that the apostle St. Peter preached, about three thousand souls were converted to the faith of Christ: For it is here said, *And they that gladly received his word, were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls*, ver. 41.

It is true, this was an extraordinary case, the Holy Ghost being that day poured down in a miraculous manner upon the apostles: And they to whom St. Peter then preached, were all *Jews*, but receiving the word with faith, they turned to Christ, and were accordingly baptized, and so made Christians; and they were the first that were made so, after our Lord's ascension into heaven.

WHEREAS I am now to preach to such as are Christians already: For I suppose you are all baptized according to Christ's institution, and by that means made his disciples, and members of his body: And therefore I need not persuade you to become Christians, but to believe and live as becometh Christians to do? and for that purpose have chosen these words, from whence to shew how you may and ought to do, after the example of these first converts to the Christian religion, of whom it is here said, that *they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*; which is doubtless left upon record by the Holy Ghost, on purpose that we may all know what they did, and by consequence, what we must do, that we may always live in the true faith of Christ, so as to attain the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls: Where we may first observe in general, that they did not think it enough to be baptized into Christ, but they still continued in him, doing all such things as he had appointed, whereby to receive grace and power from him, to walk as becometh his disciples; and so must you, if you desire to be saved by him. It is your great happiness that ye were by baptism admitted into the church and school of Christ, and so made his disciples and

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scholars; but unless you stay there, and learn and practise what ye are there taught, you will be never the better, but rather the worse for it: For now ye are brought into a state of salvation, unless ye continue to do what ye then promised, your condemnation will be the greater, in that ye do not only break the laws of God, but likewise the promise you made him when ye were baptized. And therefore ye had need to look about you, and take care to live in all respects as Christians ought to do; and for that purpose must follow the great example of these first converts to the faith of Christ, who continued stedfastly in all the great duties of the Christian religion, which are here described and left upon record for your imitation.

FIRST, *They continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine.* They did not only hearken to what the apostles said, and believe what they taught, but they continued constant and stedfast in it, so as to believe nothing as necessary to salvation, but what the apostles taught them; but to believe every thing which the apostles taught, being confident that they being acted and directed by the Spirit of God in what they taught, would never teach them any thing either false or impertinent, nothing but what was infallibly true, and absolutely necessary for them to know and believe that they might be saved. And therefore they would not hearken to any *Jewish* fables, or philosophical speculations, nor yet to their own or other mens private opinions, but kept close to the doctrine of the gospel, as delivered by the apostles of Jesus Christ the founder of it, who gave them authority to preach it, and assisted them with his own Spirit in it, that they might be sure to preach nothing but what he would have them.

THIS the first Christians knew, and therefore would never give ear to any other teachers but the apostles themselves, and such as were sent and authorized by them to preach the gospel; and this indeed was one of the doctrines which the apostles taught, That men should not hearken to any other doctrine but what they taught, and keep fast to that. *Hold fast, saith St. Paul, the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. i. 13.* And St. Peter, writing to all Christians, saith, *This second epistle, beloved, I write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2.* The prophets and apostles being all acted by the same Spirit, what they commanded men to believe and do, that was necessary to be accordingly believed and done, and nothing else: And therefore he adviseth all to continue stedfastly in their doctrine, without minding what others said or taught.

AND this certainly is the first and great thing that Christians in all ages ought to be stedfast in, even in the doctrine which Christ and his apostles taught: For that is the foundation of our whole religion, without which, all our hopes of salvation will fall to the ground; for it is by this that we believe aright in God, and in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; and it is by this also that we rightly understand our duty to God and man; and therefore without this, we can neither believe nor live according to the gospel of Christ, and by consequence can never be saved by him.

WHEREFORE, as ever you hope to be saved, ye must be sure to continue stedfastly in the doctrine which the apostles of Christ, by his order and direction delivered, at first by word of mouth, and afterwards in writing, that all generations might know it: By which means we are now as fully assured of what the apostles taught, as they could be which heard them preach it; their doctrine being transmitted to us by the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost, by which they spoke and wrote it, in that holy book which we call *The New Testament*: So that whatsoever we there read as taught by the apostles, we are sure was their doctrine, and are therefore bound stedfastly to believe it, and diligently to frame our lives according to it; but what we do not find there written, we can never be sure that they taught it, and therefore are not obliged to believe or observe it.

FROM hence ye may all see the excellency of our church, in that it requires nothing to be believed as an article of faith, but what the apostles first taught, and what the church of Christ in all ages hath believed to be consonant to the doctrine delivered in their writings. But whatsoever opinion hath no ground or foundation in them, that ours, together with the catholick church, rejecteth as either utterly false, or at best not necessary to be believed. And therefore, in order

to your continuing stedfastly, as the first Christians did in the apostles doctrine, the surest way is to keep close to the doctrine of our church, contained in our Articles and *Common-Prayer-Book*, which is plainly the same with that of the apostles in all points, without any addition, diminution or alteration whatsoever; which is the great glory of our church, and should make you not only to continue firm and dutiful to it, but likewise to thank God that ye live in such a church wherein ye are duly instructed in all the great truths which Christ and his apostles taught; and are required to believe nothing else as necessary to your being saved; by which means, as your minds may be enlightened, and your hearts purified by that faith which was once delivered to the saints, so ye are secure from falling into any damnable heresy, and from being corrupted or perplexed with any of those new and dangerous opinions which the ignorance and superstition of after-ages have brought into the church.

BUT that you may thus continue in the apostles doctrine, ye must continue also in fellowship or communion with them, as the first Christians are here said to have done. For the understanding of which, we may observe, that these persons being now baptized according to Christ's institution and order, they were thereby admitted into the number of his disciples, and so were incorporated into him, and made members of that body, of which he is head, which is a distinct society from the rest of mankind, founded by Christ himself under the name of his church, which he promised to be always with, and to direct, influence and assist with his own Holy Spirit, in the use of those means that he hath instituted and appointed to be there administered for our obtaining that eternal redemption and salvation which he purchased for us with his own most precious blood: And therefore it is here said, that *the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*, ver. 47. For which purpose he ordained and deputed his apostles and their successors, in all ages, to instruct and govern the said society, called his church, and to take care that all who are admitted into it, might have the said means of grace and salvation duly administered to them, that so they might want nothing that is necessary to their being saved by his merits and mediation for them.

Now these persons being of this holy society, *fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*, Eph. ii. 19. they always kept company and held communion or fellowship with them, not only receiving and believing the doctrine which the apostles taught, but likewise observing the rules and orders which they appointed, and using all the means of grace and salvation as administered by them, and such as were deputed by them in the name of Christ to do it: so as not to divide themselves into parties and factions, nor ever separate from that holy society into which they were admitted under any pretence whatsoever, but *continued stedfastly in the fellowship as well as doctrine of the apostles*.

Now if you would be such excellent persons as these first converts to the faith were, you must do as they did, in this as well as in other points. It is your great happiness that ye are of the same apostolical church which they were of, and therefore should *continue stedfastly in fellowship or communion* with it, as they are said to have done. It is true, there were no schisms or divisions in the church then as there are now; but the reason was, because the people did not make them, as many do in our days, who, notwithstanding that they are admitted into our church, yet are so far from continuing stedfast in communion with it, that they never think that they can separate themselves far enough from it. But let such do what they please, and take what follows, I must advise you in his name, who laid down his own life to save you, and hath brought you into his church on purpose that ye might be saved by him, in his name I advise and exhort you all to hold constant communion with it, as in believing the doctrine, so likewise in loving the members, observing the orders, submitting to the discipline, and exercising your selves continually in the means of grace which are there administered to you: So long as ye do so, ye are in the ready way to heaven, and if ye hold out to the last, ye will certainly come thither, by him in whose name I advise you to it: For while ye live in communion with our church, ye are sure to have all the means which Christ hath appointed for your salvation faithfully administered to you, in the same way and manner that he appointed: Ye are sure to be instructed in all the articles of the Christian faith, and in your whole duty both to God and man. Ye are sure to pray together in such a form, as both in the matter, method and manner of it agrees exactly with the word of God: Ye are sure to have the sacraments, institu-
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ted by Christ, administred to you in all respects according to his institution, without any additions to it, or detractions from it: ye are sure to have all this done by persons rightly ordained and authorized thereunto in the same way and manner which his apostles, by the direction of his holy Spirit, hath settled in his church: And ye are sure that what they teach you is sound and orthodox, the same doctrine which Christ and his apostles taught.

FOR when they are ordained, they solemnly profess and promise in the presence of God, that they will instruct the people committed to their charge out of the holy scriptures, and that they will teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but what they are persuaded may be concluded and proved by the said scriptures. Neither can they afterwards be admitted to preach, till they have subscribed to the articles and liturgy of our church, in which, as was before observed, the doctrine of the apostles is fully contained. And besides all this, so long as ye continue in the communion of our church, ye are sure to have the word and sacraments administred to you by such as have the care of your souls committed to them, and who are then obliged both in duty and interest, to take as much care of you as of themselves, their own eternal salvation depending in a great measure upon the faithful discharge of their office and ministry towards you, to which also God hath promised the assistance of his own grace and holy Spirit, to make it effectual to the great ends and purposes for which it is ordained; so that, all things consider'd, it is morally impossible that you should be led into error, be ignorant of the truth, or miss of grace and salvation, if you hold constant communion with the church, and sincerely believe and live as ye are here taught.

BUT if you once leave the church, whither ye will go next, I know not, nor ye neither: but this I know, that go where ye will, as ye will certainly want some of the means of grace which ye here enjoy, so you will be uncertain whether ye shall enjoy any of them, so as to attain the end, even the salvation of your souls: So that the most favourable and most charitable construction that can be put upon the separation from our church, is, That it is leaving a certainty for an uncertainty, which no wise man would do in any thing, much less in a matter upon which his eternal welfare depends: From whence ye may see, if ye will, that it is your wisdom and your interest, as well as duty, to be stedfast, not only in the doctrine, but likewise in fellowship or communion with the church, as the first disciples were.

THE next thing they continued stedfastly in, was *Breaking of bread*, or the celebration of the Lord's supper, which is so necessary to our holding communion with the church, that it hath got the name almost wholly appropriated to itself, being commonly called the communion, because in it we communicate both with Christ the head, and in him with all the sound members of his mystical body, the church. In this therefore they continued stedfastly; that is, they never failed to receive the Lord's supper whensoever it was administred, which was usually every day, or at least every Lord's day: For it is written, *And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread*, Acts xx. 7. they did not come together, it seems, to hear a sermon, which many, too many in our days, place, the most part, if not the whole of their religion in; but they came to communicate together in Christ's mystical body and blood; only being met together, the apostle took that occasion to give them a sermon. But the chief end of their coming together was to receive the sacrament, which therefore every one did, none offering to go away without receiving it: And if any did without shewing just cause, they were looked upon no longer as Christians, and therefore were cast out of the church, as not worthy to be of that holy society, in that they did not keep communion with it in the highest act of the Christian religion, and that which distinguisheth it from all other.

IF you would be such holy persons as these were, so as to live with them in heaven; in this point also ye must follow their holy example. Ye live in a church so truly apostolical, that she hath taken care that this holy sacrament may be administred as it was in the apostles days, at least every Lord's day, and also every holy day in the year. And where there are a sufficient number of communicants in any parish, the minister cannot refuse to give it them whensoever they desire it: And I hope there is never a minister in the diocese, but would be more ready to administer than his people can be to receive it. In the place where I had the honour to serve God at his altar, before he called me hither, I administred it every

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Lord's day for above twenty years together, and was so far from ever wanting communicants, that I had always as many as I and two curates could well administer it to them: For people found such extraordinary benefit and ghostly comfort from it, that they never thought they could receive it often enough; and the oftener they received it, the more they still desired it, many never omitting it, if they could possibly come to it; whereby they became the great ornaments of our holy religion, such as these first converts were: And such ye may all be, if you would but take the same course for it, the sacrament of our Lord's supper being the great means whereby to derive grace and power from him, *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;* as you would find by experience if ye were but once accustomed to it, which I therefore heartily wish ye were; at least you must neglect no opportunities that ye can get of receiving it with that repentance, faith and charity, which is requisite to the due performance of so great and heavenly a duty as that is.

BUT for that purpose ye must continue stedfastly, as in breaking of bread, so likewise, as these first disciples of our Lord did, in prayers, that is, in the publick prayers of the church: For what they did in private, every one by himself, could not be so well known; neither was it so material to know that, as how they carried themselves in relation to the church, that fellowship or communion of saints into which they were now admitted, with whom they constantly joined in their publick devotions, or such prayers as were common to them all, and so both testified their communion with them, and assisted in the worship of the most high God, and imploring his mercy for all in general, as well as every one for himself in particular; and that too, not only now and then, but every day, or as oft as possibly they could.

AND in this also ye ought to follow their pious example, by being stedfast and constant, not only in your private but publick devotions, according to that apostolical form which our church hath prescribed, that all the members of it, wheresoever they are, might join together with one heart and mind, in hearing God's holy word, in praying to him, and praising his most holy name, not only once or twice a week, but twice every day in the year, as the church requires. And accordingly there are many places in the kingdom where the prayers are now read twice every day, and I heartily wish it could be so in this too: Then you would see another face of religion among you, than you do now; for they who constantly and devoutly attended the prayers, would find themselves grow wiser and better every day more than other; and they who cannot, or will not come, would at least be put in mind of their duty, by hearing the bell every day calling them to it. In short, I know nothing that can contribute more effectually to keep up a due sense of God, and the true Christian religion in any place, than frequent communions and daily prayers. This was the way wherein the saints of God walked in the apostles days: *They continued stedfastly, as in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, so likewise in breaking bread, and in prayers.* And if you would follow them while ye are upon earth, ye need not doubt but ye will come to them in heaven, thro the intercession which our blessed Saviour is always making for them who do so.

IN his name therefore I beseech you all to do so: *Continue stedfastly, as they did, in the apostles doctrine and fellowship: Be not tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive,* Eph. iv. 14. This was a necessary caution in the apostles days, and so it is in ours, wherein that prophecy of St. Peter is fulfilled, where he saith, *There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction,* 2 Pet. i. 1. And that of St. Paul, *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, &c. Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: From such turn away. For of this sort, are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,* 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7. And elsewhere he foretels, *the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears,* ch. iv. 3. This you see was foretold by the Spirit of God in the apostles, and therefore cannot wonder it should be so. It cannot be otherwise but as St. Paul saith, *There must be also heresies or schisms among you, that they which are ap-*

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proved of may be made manifest among you, 1 Cor. xi. 13. But do ye take care to be in the number of those that are approved of for their Stedfastness to the apostles doctrine and fellowship, always carrying in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves, Mat. vii. 15.

BUT it is not enough to continue stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, but ye must do so likewise in breaking of bread and in prayers, and in all the means which Christ hath ordained whereby to obtain grace and salvation by him; which ye cannot chuse but do, if ye really mind your future state, and make it your chief care and study in this world to prepare for the next, that ye may be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. And why should not ye be so as well as others? Ye have the same scriptures to direct you, the same Spirit to assist you, the same sacraments to strengthen you, the same Saviour to intercede for you as they had; Why then should not ye get to heaven as well as they? Whatsoever your condition is in this world, ye are all as yet capable of eternal life and happiness; and living in such a church where the means of grace are so duly administered to you, ye cannot miss of it, if ye do but seek it as ye ought, before all things else.

THIS therefore is that which I would now persuade you all to, and should think my self happy if I could do it. Play no longer with religion, as people commonly do, but set upon the practice of it in good earnest. As ye profess to believe the gospel, live according to the rules and precepts of it, that ye may adorn your holy profession with a suitable conversation. Let not drunkenness or uncleanness, swearing, cursing, lying, covetousness, contempt of God's holy word, or any such notorious sins, be so much as named among you; but strive all ye can to shine as lights in the world, that ye may be the great examples of true piety and virtue to one another, and to all that are about you. This would be the most effectual means to convince the enemies of our church and holy religion, of their errors and mistakes, when they see you who profess it, so far exceeding and outdoing them in your constancy at your devotions, in your frequency at the holy communion, in your temperance and sobriety, in your meekness, patience and humility, in your truth and justice in all your dealings together, in your liberality to your poor brethren, in your zeal for God, in your loyalty to your sovereign, in your kindness, love and charity to one another, and in all such good works as God hath prepared for you in your several places and callings to walk in; still trusting in your blessed Saviour, both for his assistance of you in what ye do, and for God's acceptance of it when it is done.

THIS is the way too to have a place ready prepared for you in heaven against your departure out of this wicked and naughty world, that you may live together with the glorified saints and angels, and with Christ himself, in all the ease and plenty, in all the joy, happiness and glory that creatures are capable of, not only for some time, but to all eternity, and all through his merits and mediation for you.

WHEREFORE, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord; in the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and for ever.



S E R M O N CIII.

Christ's Grace sufficient to make Christians Holy.

PHIL. iv. 13.

I can do all things through Christ which strengthneth me.

ALTHOUGH we had no divine revelation for it, yet our own experience might easily convince us that we are not such creatures as the All-wise and most Holy God at first made and designed us to be, but that we are very much corrupted, degenerated, and fallen from our first estate: For God made all things good, and therefore man too; but now there is not a man upon the face of the earth, that is, or doth good of himself, no not one. The very best may say, as one of the best that ever was did, *I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me: For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members,* Rom. vii. 21, 22, 23. They that have no sense at all of good or evil upon their minds, are too sad instances of the corruption of human nature. If any can plead exemption from it, it must be such as St. Paul was, who are not only sensible of the difference between good and evil, but really desire to eschew the evil, and do good. And yet these find, as he did, a contrary principle in them, putting them upon doing the evil they would not, and hindring them in doing the good they would do; whereby it comes to pass, that of themselves they can do nothing that can truly be termed good, because that nothing is perfectly so; but in their very best actions there is still such a mixture of evil, so many failures and imperfections, as quite spoil and corrupt them. They cannot pray without distraction, nor so much as think upon God, but the thoughts of other things will be crowding into their heads: They cannot come into God's presence, but their minds will be running out again every moment: They cannot read, or hear God's holy word, nor praise his name, nor receive the blessed sacrament itself, but they are still disturbed and interrupted in it by some unruly passion or other: They cannot subdue any sin so, but it will go near to get up again; nor overcome the world so, as to keep it always under: They cannot give an alms, but they are apt to fail either in the quantity of what they give, or else in the quality and manner of giving it. In short, they can do nothing as they ought to do it; but when they have exerted the utmost of their own strength, and have done all that possibly they can by it, they come short of what the law of God requires. This they all know and feel by woful experience, and it is the greatest trouble that they have in the world; so great that it makes them cry out as St. Paul did, in the place before quoted, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24.

WHO shall deliver me? It is a very hard question; but the apostle resolves it in the next words, saying, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,* ver. 25. As if he had said, though none else can deliver me from the body of this death and sin, yet I
thank

thank God for it, he can and will do it, thro Jesus Christ our Lord; where we may observe how he ascribes his deliverance from the power of sin, and his ability to do good, wholly and solely to the grace of God, thro Jesus Christ: By whom the same apostle, who there complains so grievously of his own natural weakness and inability to do any thing that is good, in my text assures us, he could do all things; *I can do all things*, saith he, *thro Christ which strengtheneth me*.

A STRANGE expression, but not so strange as true; nor true but it is as great a comfort and encouragement to all that concern themselves in good earnest about their future state: For we cannot but all know that in order to our being happy in the other world, it is necessary for us to do many things whilst we are in this, whereby to prepare and qualify our selves for it; and we cannot but be sensible withal, that by our own strength we are not able to do any one of these things as we ought to do it; and by consequence if we look no farther than ourselves, we may even lay aside all thoughts of heaven, and trouble our selves no more about it, for all our labour would be in vain and to no purpose: But when we consider on the other side, that although we can do nothing of our selves, yet we can do all things through Christ that strengthens us; this must needs inspire us with holy resolutions, *to be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; as we see it did St. Paul, who, notwithstanding his manifold sins and infirmities, which made him look upon himself as the chiefest of all sinners, yet here he rejoices and glories in his power to do all things by Christ's assistance, *I can do all things thro Christ who strengtheneth me*.

AND though he speaks this only of himself, yet he speaks it of himself only as a Christian; and therefore all Christians may speak it, every one of himself, as well as he did; and it is left upon record on purpose that we might all know where our strength lies, and how we also may be enabled to do all things, even by Christ which strengthens us.

BUT that we may fully understand the true sense and meaning of the words, we shall briefly consider in what sense it is here said, that we can do all things; how Christ strengthens us; and by what means we may receive strength from him to do all things.

THE power of doing all things is the same with Omnipotence, which is one of God's incommunicable perfections: How then comes it here to be communicated to his creatures? Much in the same sense as it is in God; only in a lower degree, as creatures are capable of it: And though it be attributed unto them, it is still God's power in them, and so it is he, not they, that are omnipotent; and although he be omnipotent, there are some things of which it may be truly said that he cannot do them: He cannot do that which implies a contradiction: He cannot deny himself, he cannot lie, he cannot die. And yet he is not less omnipotent because he cannot do these things, but rather, he therefore cannot do them because he is omnipotent, such things as those arguing only weakness and impotence. But he is therefore properly said to be omnipotent, because he can do whatsoever he will: So that there are many things a Christian cannot do: He cannot create a new world: He cannot produce any thing out of nothing; for then he would be both a creature and a creator, which implies a contradiction: But a Christian can do whatsoever he will as a Christian; all things that God would have him do in order to his eternal salvation: And in this sense it is that St. Paul here saith, *he can do all things*, as is plain from the context; *I know*, saith he, *both how to be abased, and I know how to abound, every where and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need*; and then adds, *I can do all things*, that is, all such things as belong to me as a Christian to do, in whatsoever state or condition I am: I can do all things that God requires me to do, whereby to promote his honour and glory in the world, and at last to obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ my Lord.

AND in this sense all Christians, and we as well as others can do all things, all things that God would have us; all things that we are bound to do to him or one another; all things necessary to fit us for heaven, or to bring us thither. Particularly we can repent of all our sins and turn to God: We can crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts: We can resist the devil and make him flee from us: We can overcome the world and live above it: We can love, and fear, and desire, and rejoice, and trust in God with all our hearts: We can pray sincerely to him,

him, we can praise him heartily, we can read and hear his word attentively, and receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper worthily: we can devote our time to his honour, spend our estates in his service, and if there be occasion, lay down our lives for his sake: We can adore and worship him with reverence and godly fear, we can walk in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

AND as for our neighbours, we can honour and obey our parents, and submit to the governors that God hath set over us in church or state: We can *love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us*: We can as freely forgive the injuries we have received from others, as we desire God should forgive those we have done him: We can make restitution of what we have heretofore wronged others of, and for the future keep ourselves from wronging any man in name, body, or estate: We can be meek and humble, chaste and modest, sober and temperate in ourselves: And we can be true and faithful, just and righteous in our dealings with all men: We can always do to others, as we would have them do to us: We can keep our tongues from lying and flandering, as well as our hands from picking and stealing: We can instruct the ignorant, reprove the obstinate, support the weak, comfort the disconsolate, help the oppressed and relieve the poor, according as opportunity shall serve, and our estates will bear. In short, we can do all that the grace of God, which brings salvation, teacheth us: We can *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*: And when we go out of it, we can commit our souls to him that redeemed them with his own most precious blood.

BUT how can these things be? How is it possible for us to do so many and great things as these are, when, as the apostle saith; *We are not sufficient of ourselves so much as to think any thing as of ourselves*? 2 Cor. iii. 5. It is true he saith so, but he resolves the doubt in the very next words, saying, that *our sufficiency is of God*. And so he doth in my text, saying, *I can do all things*; how? of my self? by mine own strength? no, but *through Christ which strengtheneth me*. And if he who is Almighty, and can of himself do all things, if he strengtheneth us, it is no wonder that we by his strength can do all things too.

BUT then the next question to be consider'd, is, How Christ strengtheneth us: how; not whether he doth it: For that he doth it, there can be no question, it being so expressly asserted here by the apostle; and besides, unless Christ strengthens us, so as that we can do all things by him that are necessary to salvation, he would not be our Saviour. But that he is our Saviour, and *is able to save to the utmost all that come to God by him*, we all agree; and therefore cannot but with all acknowledge that there is nothing necessary to be done in order to our being saved by him, but what we may be enabled by him to do.

BUT how he strengthens such infirm creatures as we are, so as that we can do all things by him, is a great question, and very difficult to be resolved, forasmuch as he doth it by his Almighty power, which we cannot comprehend while we are in the body, nor perceive how he exerts it upon us: Only this we know, that he doth it insensibly, and by degrees, as we are able to bear it; and that he doth it, not as God only, but as God-man, and so the Mediator betwixt God and us; and as such, hath all power given unto him both in heaven and earth, by which he is able to empower us to do all things that are required to our obtaining that eternal redemption which he hath purchased for us with the price of his own blood. And as Almighty God, the Creator of the world, doth by his general providence govern and dispose all things in it, so as that every thing doth what he would have it, and so answer his end in creating it; so Christ having purchased to himself an universal church, takes particular care of that, ordering all things in it, and affording every member of it power sufficient to do whatsoever he would have done by it, for the accomplishing his end in purchasing it: And that we may not be altogether ignorant of his way in giving such power and strength to the several members of his church, to do all things that he requires of them, he himself hath given us some light into it, both with his own mouth, and by his holy Spirit inspiring his prophets and apostles to do it.

As where he saith, *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth*

in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing, John xv. 1, 4, 5. Whereby he gives us to understand, that as a vine branch, if it be cut off or severed from the stock, presently wither and grows fruitless; but if it continue in the stock, it receives sap and nourishment from thence, whereby it is enabled to bring forth such fruit as God designed it should; so if a man be not in Christ, but is separated from him, such a one can do nothing at all that is good; but if a man be grafted in him, or united to him, so as to be a true member of him, then as the stock communicates its virtues to the branches, so doth he communicate or convey from himself so much grace and virtue to such a one, as is sufficient to make him fruitful in all good works.

St. Paul explains it much the same way: He compares Christ and his church to the body of a man or other animal: Of this body Christ is the head, and all true Christians are the members, every one in his proper place, 1 Cor. xii. 12. Eph. iv. 15, 16. Now as the several parts of a man's body are all animated, and enabled to perform their respective offices by the animal spirits which are transmitted into them from the head; so all the sound members of Christ's body are actuated by the spirit that proceedeth from him, and is directed and infused by him into every one of them, whereby they are strengthened and empowered to perform all such duties as he hath set them.

AGAIN, the Holy Ghost compares Christ to the sun, saying by the prophet Malachi, *Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings*, Mal. iv. 2. which expression, being doubtless to be understood of Christ, will give us great light into this mystery: For the sun, we know, doth not only give light unto the world, but also heat, motion and activity to all things in it: It is that which invigorates the earth, and makes it fruitful, causing all sorts of herbs, and plants, and trees, to spring out of it, and to bring forth flowers, and fruits, and seeds, every one according to its respective kind and quality. Now what the sun is to the world, that is Christ to his church: He is the sun of righteousness, that causeth righteousness to spring up there; and being long since risen, he shines continually upon it, with healing in his wings or rays, even the wholesome benign influences of his Holy Spirit, whereby he heals us of our unfruitfulness and all our spiritual distempers; so that we shall not be *barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ*, as St. Peter speaks, but shall abound in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and the like, which St. Paul therefore calls the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22.

AND as the sun, although the body of it be only in heaven, yet by its beams produceth such wonderful effects as we see it doth upon earth; so Christ, altho his body or human nature, far more glorious than the sun, be not only in the highest heavens at the right hand of God, yet by his Spirit that proceedeth from him, he so actuates and influenceth his church upon earth, that the sound members of it are enabled thereby to do all those wonderful things we spake of, even all things that are required of them.

BUT in this Christ infinitely exceeds the sun, forasmuch as tho his body of human nature be only in heaven, yet his divine person, to which that nature is united, is in all places of the world, and in a more peculiar manner in his church, with all his true and faithful disciples. This he assured his apostles of, just as he was going up to heaven, *Lo, saith he, I am with you always, ὡς εἰς τὰς ἡμέρας*, every day, continually, *to the end of the world*, Mat xxviii. 20. And elsewhere he tells them, that his Holy Spirit, *the Comforter should abide with them for ever*, John xiv. 16. He shall not only come to them now and then, but shall abide constantly with them, he shall dwell with them, and in them.

To which purpose we have a remarkable passage in St. Paul, who being troubled with a thorn in the flesh, earnestly besought the Lord Christ, that it might depart from him; and at length received this gracious answer: *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*. From whence the apostle draws this inference, *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. where the word is ἐπισκευή, *may dwell in me*, as the שכינה or divine presence did in the tabernacle and temple, where there was a kind of a cloud, the symbol of God's special presence, resting continually between the cherubim over the ark, which was therefore called שכינה *God's inhabitation* or *dwelling there*: And so it is that he dwells in every Christian, whose body is said to be the temple of God: *Know ye not, saith the apostle, that*

ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you, 1 Cor. iii. 16. And again, *What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?* 1 Cor. vi. 19. From whence it appears, that every true Christian hath the Spirit of God residing and dwelling continually in him, as well as the temple of God ever had it; and it is for this cause that he is called the temple of God, it being by this means that he is dedicated to God, and God keeps, as it were, possession of him, by dwelling continually in him.

BUT where the Spirit of God and Christ is, there is Christ; where that abideth, there Christ abideth. *Hereby we know, saith St. John, that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us,* 1 John iii. 24. And hence it is, that Christ himself is so often said to be in us. *I in them, saith he, and thou in me,* John xvii. 23. *And that the love wherewith thou lovest me, may be in them, and I in them,* ver. 26. *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him,* John vi. 56. And St. Paul saith, *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,* Gal. ii. 20. And in the same epistle to the Galatians, *My little children, saith he, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,* Gal. iv. 19. And to the Ephesians, *That Christ may dwell in your hearts,* Eph. iii. 16. And elsewhere, *Know ye not your own selves, that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates,* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. And this he saith is the great mystery which was hid from former ages, but it is now made manifest to the saints. *To whom, saith he, God would make known, what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is, Christ in you, the hope of glory,* Col. i. 27. All which expressions used by Christ himself and his holy Spirit, plainly imply, that he himself by his said Spirit, doth in a special and marvelous manner inhabit and reside in all true Christians, exercising his own almighty power in them, and so sanctifying them wholly in soul, body, and spirit, and enabling them to order their whole conversation according to the rules he hath set them in his holy gospel; as is intimated also by the word which we translate, *strengtheneth*, in my text: For in the original it is, ἐνδυναμῶν, *that strengtheneth me within*; implying, that he himself is within us, strengthening and assisting us; and as the same apostle saith in another place of this epistle, *Working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure,* Phil. ii. 13. And when Christ himself doth in such a wonderful manner inhabit and strengthen us by his own Almighty Spirit, it is no wonder that we can do all things: We may well do all things by him, who can do all things by himself.

BUT there is another question to be resolved, which nearly concerns us all, and that is, what we must do, that we also, as well as others, may be thus strengthened by Christ, so as to be able to do all things by him. But this will be easily resolved: For it is plain from the whole design and tenour of the gospel, that the great thing required on our parts, is to believe in him; not only to believe what is written of him, and revealed by him in his holy gospel, but also to trust and depend upon him to strengthen and assist us, according to the promises which are there made us: For he himself resolves the whole of our salvation by him into our believing in him; saying, *That God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,* John iii. 16. And if whosoever believeth in him shall have everlasting life, then whosoever believeth in him, must needs be strengthened and enabled by him to do whatsoever is necessary in order thereunto: And so before every one is, who believeth in him, upon that account because he believeth in him, faith being the means whereby we are united to Christ, and made members of his body, and therefore participate of that holy Spirit which proceedeth from him, our head: For *we are made partakers of Christ,* saith the apostle, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast to the end,* Heb. iii. 14. that is, so long as we continue to believe stedfastly and confidently in him, we are partakers of Christ, not only of his merit for the pardon of our sins, but of his strength and Spirit, to direct and assist us in doing all such good works as he hath prepared for us to walk in: For as we are justified, so we are sanctified also by faith in him, we may be confident of it, for we have it from his own mouth, saying, *that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them, which are sanctified by faith that is in me,* Acts xxvi. 18.

AND hence it is, that all the great exploits that a Christian doth, are still ascribed to his faith. By faith we overcome the world: *For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* 1 John v. 4, 5. By faith we resist and conquer

all the powers of hell: *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*, Eph. vi. 16. By this we obtain whatsoever we ask of God: *Therefore I say unto you, faith Christ himself, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark. xi. 24. By faith we can *remove mountains*, Mat. xvii. 20. that is, we can do the greatest and most difficult things that God requires: As we see in the father of the faithful, who at God's command was able to offer up his only Son, in whom God himself had promised that he and all nations should be blessed; which was certainly the hardest task that ever was set any man; but it was not too hard for faith, to which nothing is impossible, as Christ himself said to the man in the gospel; *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth*, Mark ix. 23. And the reason is, because *faith, as the apostle saith, is the substance of things hoped for*, causing all those great things which God hath promised, and we therefore hope for at his hands, actually to subsist, and be verified in us. But God hath promised, that he himself to whom all things are possible, will strengthen and enable us to do his will: And therefore it is impossible that any thing which he commands should be impossible to one that believeth. Hence therefore, if we desire to be so assisted by Christ, as to be able to do all things through him, we must firmly believe in him, and live with a constant trust and dependence upon him for his assistance, and then we cannot fail of it; but as *Abraham* believed and it was imputed to him for righteousness, so we thus believing in Christ, shall by him be enabled to fulfil all righteousness, so as that notwithstanding any defects there may be in it by reason of our imperfect state here below, yet it shall be *acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And so we may truly say with St. Paul, *I can do all things thro Christ which strengtheneth me*.

THE sense of the words being thus cleared up, it will be easy to observe several things in them very worthy of a Christian's notice. First, we may observe that we can do nothing of our selves; for if we do all things by Christ there is nothing left for us to do of our selves without him; and it is very well there is not; for if there was, I do not know how we should do it, seeing Christ himself saith, *without me ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. As he is God, we can do nothing at all, as he is Christ our Saviour, we can do nothing that is good, without him. It is true, we can sin without him, we can dishonour God without him, we can destroy our selves without him; but the doing of such things, is not so properly doing any thing, as not doing what we ought: But we cannot save ourselves, we cannot honour God, we cannot keep any one of his commands without him: *For we are not sufficient of our selves so much as to think any thing of our selves*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. And if we cannot think any thing good of our selves, we can much less do it: No, when we do ill we must blame our selves, when we do well we must thank God for it: And therefore whatsoever it is wherein we may seem to excel others, we have no cause to be proud of it, or to glory in it; much less can we merit any thing by it, seeing we are beholden wholly unto our Saviour for it: For as the apostle argues, *Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou which thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

THIS is a thing much to be observed: For if we happen to be or do any thing better than others, we are very apt to boast, or at least to be proud of it, which doth not only spoil all the good we do, but makes us incapable of doing any good at all; *for God resisteth the proud, and giveth peace to the humble*, 1 Pet. v. 5. So that where there is pride, there is no grace; and where there is no grace, no good be sure can be done there: And therefore, as ever we desire to do all things, or indeed any thing at all by Christ's assistance, we must be always humble and lowly in our own eyes, and truly sensible of our own weakness and inability to do any thing without him, and then we shall be in a right disposition to receive such power and virtue from him, as to be able to say, we can do all things thro Christ which strengthens us.

BUT in the next place, we may observe also from hence, that notwithstanding our own natural weakness and infirmities, we have no cause to complain of our inability to keep any of God's commandments; for what is wanting in us, is abundantly supplied by our blessed Saviour. Though we can do nothing without him, there is nothing but we may do by him, who hath not only repaired the loss we sustained in our first parents, but hath done it with mighty advantage to us: By them we lost our natural, by him we gain supernatural; by them we lost finite, by him we gain

gain infinite strength; by them we lost our own, by him we have the power of God himself to enable us to do his will; that power by which God himself doth whatsoever he will: So that we have not so much cause to be sorry for our fall in the first *Adam*, as we have to rejoice at our redemption by the second, who, as he hath broken the head of the old serpent, and tied his hands himself, so he gives us power to do it too, the same power by which he himself did it; that power which no creature is able to resist, and by consequence, not all the devils in hell. It is true, St. *Paul* represents them to us under very frightful appearances, as if he had a mind to terrify us with them, calling them *principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places*, Eph. vi. 12. And yet we are able to conquer them all, conquer them did I say, that is too low an expression; for as the same apostle speaks, *ὑπερνικῶμεν, we are more than conquerors thro him that loved us*, Rom. viii. 37. We do not only conquer them, but we do it with joy and triumph, being fully persuaded, as he there goes on triumphantly, *that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

AND as by this divine power which we receive from Christ, we are able to destroy the works of the devil; so likewise the works of God, even all such works as he sees good to set us. *I can do all things*, saith St. *Paul*; neither did he only say it, but do it; What did he not do, what did he not suffer for Christ's sake? It would make one amazed to read or hear the history of his life, as he himself describes it, 2 Cor. xi. 22, 23, &c. And yet he was so far from sinking under any burden that was laid upon him, that he took pleasure and delight in it. *I take pleasure*, saith he, *in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake*, 2 Cor. xii. 10. Strange things for a man to take pleasure in, but not for a Christian assisted by Christ himself, as he intimates in the following words; saying, *For when I am weak, then am I strong*; that is, the weaker I am in my self, the more strength I receive from Christ. And what could not he do by his strength who can do all things? By that he thought himself able to endure the very flames of hell: For he could wish himself *accursed from Christ*, for the glory of God, in the salvation of his brethren the *Jews*, Rom. ix. 3. which is certainly the hardest thing that it is possible for a creature to do, and more than God ever required of any man: And yet St. *Paul*, as well as *Moses*, could willingly have undergone it, if it had been possible, for Christ's sake and by his strength. And although the strength of Christ does not manifest itself after the same manner, yet it is the same in all true Christians, as it was in St. *Paul*: And therefore we need not despond or despair of doing any thing that God commands, seeing he commands nothing but what he himself gives us power to do. And we can do nothing by our own, by his power there is nothing but we can do; so that every one of us may say as truly as St. *Paul*, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*. But, as the same apostle elsewhere observes, *we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of men*, 2 Cor. iv. 7. The power which we have in and by Christ, is excellent, it is infinite, such power whereby we may or can do all things: But we who have this power, being of ourselves but finite, weak and infirm creatures, we seldom or never use it so as actually to do all things by it, or indeed any thing so perfectly and exactly as the law requires. It is true, as Christ himself knows, and therefore hath made abundant provision for it: For he having in our nature, and for our sakes, been perfectly obedient, even to death itself; hence as we have infinite power in him to enable us to do all things, so we have infinite merit too, to satisfy for the defects of our obedience, and to render every thing we do as well-pleasing to God, as if it was most perfectly done; or, as the apostle himself expresseth it, *He makes us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ*, Heb. xiii. 21. So that as we can do all things through Christ which strengthens us, so God accepts of all things we do, through his merits and mediation for us.

FURTHERMORE, We may observe from these words, That whatsoever we do by Christ, it is still we that do it. *I*, saith the apostle, *can do all things through Christ*, and, *through Christ which strengtheneth me*. He was the person whom Christ enabled to act, and he was the person who acted by that ability which Christ gave him. So it is with all of us; all the good we do, we do it by Christ's assistance; but we are properly the agents who do it by that assistance. As when he himself was incarnate

nate of the blessed virgin, he was conceived in her by the power of the holy Ghost overshadowing her, and yet she is said to have conceived him. *Behold, saith the angel unto her, Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus,* Luke i. 31. So here, all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works come from God, being wrought in us by the power of Christ's holy Spirit; yet nevertheless we are the persons who produce and act them by that power: And therefore, where our Saviour saith to his disciples, *When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you,* Mat. x. 19, 20. the meaning is not, that they should not be the persons that spake; for he himself saith they shall, saying, *it shall be given you what ye shall speak;* but the meaning is, that they should not speak of themselves, of their own heads; but the matter they were to speak, should be dictated and suggested into them by the holy Ghost, who is therefore said to speak in them; but they were to speak it to the people. To the same purpose is that remarkable saying of St. Paul, *By the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me,* 1 Cor. xv. 10. that is, not I by my own strength, but by the grace of God: It is by that I laboured more abundantly than others; it is by that I am what I am, and do what I do; but still it is I that am and do so. He ascribes the glory of all he did to the grace of God, yet nevertheless he was the person who did it by that grace: As, altho it be the heat and influence of the sun, which by God's blessing upon it, causeth the earth to fructify; yet it is *the earth it self that bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed,* as the apostle speaks, Heb. vi. 7.

NEITHER will it seem strange, that we should be said to do that which we do not by our own, but by Christ's strength, if we consider that in this case we are not mere tools or machines; but Christ by his holy Spirit moves upon our minds in a way suitable to our nature, as we are reasonable creatures, endowed with the power of discerning between good and evil, and of chusing the one before the other; and therefore he useth no violence upon us; he doth not drive, but lead us, Rom. ii. 4. he doth not force us one way or other contrary to our wills; but he dispels those clouds and fogs which darken our understandings, and corrupt our judgments, and so he clears up our apprehensions of good and evil, that we may judge aright both of one and the other; and then freeing our wills from such distempers as disorder and pervert them, he influenceth and disposeth them so, that we freely, and of our own accord, chuse the good before the evil, and so become *a willing people in the day of his power,* Psal. cx. 3. willing to observe and do whatsoever he commands. But for this we are beholden to his power, who is therefore said *to work in us to will, as well as to do,* Phil. ii. 13. because it is by his grace that our wills are thus inclined to do what is good, as well as our hands empowered to do it: And therefore David prays, that God would incline his heart, saying to him, *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,* Psal. cxix. 36. And accordingly, after the repetition of each commandment, we pray to God, saying, *Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.* And seeing Christ is pleased thus to work upon us in a way so agreeable to our own natural constitution; altho we can do nothing but by his grace and power, yet whatsoever we do, we are the persons who do it, and who do it as men, as understanding and free agents, with the whole bent and inclination of our own wills, and so make it our own act; as it is said of Lydia, *That God opened her heart, that she attended to what was spoken by Paul,* Acts xvi. 14. God opened her heart, and then she herself attended and embraced the truth. So in my text, altho St. Paul was sensible that whatsoever he did, he did it only by the strength of Christ, yet he doth not say, Christ doth all things by me, but, *I my self can do all things by Christ which strengtheneth me.*

AND hence it is that God is graciously pleased for his Son's sake to accept of what we do, as done by us, because tho we do it not by our own strength, but his, yet it is we that do it; and altho we are so far from meriting any thing at his hands by what we do, that we are more beholden to him than he is to us for it; yet howsoever upon the account of what Christ hath merited for us, he of his infinite mercy is pleased to recompense all the good we do, with a far more exceeding

and eternal weight of glory. This we may be assured of, as St. Paul was, when he said, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*: All this he did through Christ which strengthened him: And then he adds, *From henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to them also that love his appearing*, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. And so on the other side, if any of us fail in our duty to God, we must bear the blame and the punishment too: For seeing Christ's grace is sufficient for us all, and none of us but may, if we will, do all things necessary to our salvation through him; if there be any such thing which we do not, it is not because we cannot, but because we will not do it, and so the fault is wholly in our selves, in the obstinacy and perverseness of our own wills, and therefore we justly deserve to be punished for it. This the gospel represents to us under the similitude of a tree, that hath all things necessary to make it fruitful, and yet continues barren, or doth not bring forth good fruit. Now also, saith St. John the baptist, *even now, that the Son of righteousness is risen upon the world; now the ax is laid to the root of the trees, therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewen down and cast into the fire*, Mat. iii. 10. And in the parable of the fig-tree which a man planted in his vineyard, and finding no fruit upon it for three years together, in which it should have borne some, He said to the dresser of the vineyard, *cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground; and he answering said, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it, (and so do every thing that may make it bear;) and then if it bear fruit, well, if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down*, Luke xiii. 6, 9. Thus our blessed Saviour seeing a fig-tree, and finding no fruit upon it as he expected, he cursed it, so that it immediately dried up and withered away, Mat. xxi. 19. So here, Christ having tasted death for every man, Heb. ii. 9. every man is capable of attaining eternal life by him, and by consequence, able to do all things by him, that are necessary in order thereunto: But if men will not make use of that grace and strength which he affords them, whereby to bring forth fruit meet for repentance, they can in reason expect no other, but like fruitless trees, to be cut down and cast into the fire, *into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*: And therefore we had need to look about us, and take heed lest we neglect that grace which is offered to us in the gospel of Christ. By him *working in us both to will and to do*, we may all work out our salvation with fear and trembling: But if we refuse and rebel, and notwithstanding all that he hath done, and is always ready to do for us, will still continue to mistrust his promises, and slight the grace which he offers to us, we shall certainly be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day, 2 Thes. i. 9, 10. And it will be a great addition to our misery, that we might have been happy if we would, but we would not; we would not make use of Christ's assistance, otherwise we might have done whatsoever was required to make us happy; as St. Paul found by experience, saying, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*. Through Christ which strengtheneth me; which words afford us another very remarkable observation: For the apostle doth not say, *I can do all things through Christ which hath strengthened me, or which did strengthen me*, by infusing the principles of grace and virtue into my heart at first; but he speaks in the present tense, *ἐνδυναμῶν με, which doth strengthen me*: He looks upon Christ as strengthening him continually, assisting him in every thing he spake, or did, or thought; and so ought we to do: We ought to act our faith continually upon our Saviour, that so we may be always deriving power and virtue from him to eschew evil and do good: We must apply our selves to him upon all occasions, so as to undertake nothing but in his name, and by his strength. This is that which the apostle expressly commands, saying, *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*, Col. iii. 17. This was the course which he himself took, whereby to do all things through Christ which strengthened him: And he would have us take the same course too, if we desire to do all things effectually as he did. When David undertook to fight with Goliath, he did it in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. And if we desire to conquer our spiritual enemies, as he did the Philistines, we must

set

set upon them only in the name of Christ, the great captain of our salvation: And if we would do any thing at all as we ought, we must begin it, carry it on, and finish it only in him: actually believing and trusting on him to assist us in it, and to supply us with such a measure of his grace and holy Spirit, as may be sufficient to carry us through it: As suppose we pray, if we do it in his name, we are sure to be heard; for we have his own word for it, saying, *Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. The same holds good as to all the actions of our life; whatsoever we do in his name, be sure is well done, and God for his sake will accept of it: So that by this means we may always live as becometh Christians, and be able to say, as St. Paul did, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*.

AND why should not you and I be able to say so, as well as St. Paul? Christ is our Saviour, as well as his, and both as willing and as able to assist us, as he was to assist him. Why then should not we do all things by Christ, as well as he? Let us therefore now resolve to do so in good earnest: Whatsoever Almighty God requires of us, in order to our serving him while we are upon earth, and to our living with him hereafter in heaven, let us but set about it in the name of Christ, and we need not fear but by his assistance we shall be able to accomplish it: Or rather, we ought not to fear or doubt at all of it, but firmly believe that he according to his promise will assist us, and then he will most certainly do it. Let us therefore banish out of our hearts all diffident and unbelieving thoughts of Christ, and put our whole trust and confidence in him to carry us through our whole duty both to God and man: Wheresoever we are, let us look upon him as present with us; whatsoever we do, let us look upon him as helping us to do it: And for that purpose, let us be constant in performing our private devotions to God in his name; and in his name converse as much as possibly we can with him in his publick ordinances, in praying and praising God, in reading and hearing his most holy word; and so we may live under the influences of his blessed Spirit, and have it always with us and in us. Above all, let us take all the opportunities we can get of receiving his most blessed body and blood, to put us in mind of him, to confirm our faith in him, and to draw virtue from him, the fountain of all wisdom and goodness, to make us wise and good. In short, let us but keep our minds and our faith always fixed upon our blessed Saviour, and we shall find by experience, that he will strengthen and assist us by his grace and holy Spirit, so as that we shall be able to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, and at last obtain everlasting life through his merits and mediation for us: *To whom, &c.*



S E R M O N CIV.

The Nature, Extent, and Polity of God's
Kingdom upon Earth.

P S A L. xcvi. 1.

*The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the
isles be glad thereof.*

ALTHO we cannot arrive at the perfection of happiness, till we come into the other world, where we shall be so perfectly holy, that all our inclinations shall center in God, and so we shall be at perfect rest and quiet; yet even in this life we may attain a considerable degree of it, if we would but set our selves in good earnest about it. For the greatest part of the miseries which we suffer upon earth, are plainly of our own making; in that we suffer our selves to be toss'd to and fro with every wind that blows upon us, ruffled and discompos'd at every thing that falls out contrary to our expectation, opinion or desire, altho we have no reason at all for it, our happiness and welfare being no farther concern'd in it, than as we make it to be our selves: For that doth not depend upon any thing that is without us, but is seated only in our minds, which we may, if we will, keep always serene and calm, in the midst of all the storms and tempests that may beat upon us; and so may really be happy in our selves, notwithstanding any thing that doth, or can befall us in this world, if it be not our own faults: I say, our fault, for so certainly it is, and a very great one too, to trouble and torment our selves, as we commonly do, without any real cause, and to make our selves miserable, when we need not be so, yea when we ought not to be so, it being directly contrary to the express command of God, who requires us not to be disturb'd or discontented at any thing, but *in every thing to give thanks*, and to *rejoice evermore*, 1 Thes. v. 16, 18. Which are as plain commands, as any are in the whole bible, and therefore ought to be as strictly observ'd; so that whatsoever happens in the world, how cross soever it may seem to our present designs, or contrary to our corrupt inclinations, we are still bound, not only to bear it patiently, but to be chearful, and pleasant, and thankful under it. But for that purpose, we must always look beyond the thing it self, and fix our eye upon him that doth it, even upon Almighty God, who is the only object of all true joy and happiness, and who always is so, whether we have or have not any thing else to rejoice in. And therefore we are commanded to *rejoice in the Lord alway*, Phil. iv. 4. which command they plainly break, who either do not rejoice in the Lord at all, or do not always rejoice in him.

But how happy are they who always keep it? Nothing can move or disturb them; for their hearts are always fixed, trusting and rejoicing in him that orders all things; whereby they are not only freed from all those frights and fears, from all those unruly passions and perturbations of mind, which other men are continually subject to, but even in this life they enjoy as much happiness as their imperfect state is capable of, and are in the ready way to attain the perfection of it in the other world.

Now happiness being a thing, which I am confident we all desire, and this being the only way whereby we can ever come at it, I shall endeavour to make it as plain as I can, from the words which I have now read. Wherein for that purpose, we shall consider,

- I. WHOM we are here to understand by the Lord.
- II. WHAT by his reigning.
- III. How the consideration of this great truth, *The Lord reigneth*, should make the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof, rejoice and be glad: And so, how the latter part of this verse follows clearly from the former; *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.*

THE first question, Whom we are here to understand by *the Lord*, may seem at first sight to be so very easy, that we need not make any question of it; it being past all doubt, that by *the Lord*, we are here to understand him whom we otherwise call God. It is true; but it is one thing to say so, and another to understand what we say when we speak it. And this is altogether as difficult, as the other is easy; our souls being so deprav'd and darken'd, that we cannot, without great study and application, frame such ideas and conceptions of God in our minds, as are necessary to our right understanding what we say, when we speak of him; without which our speaking of him will be to no purpose, as having no power or force at all upon our minds.

HENCE therefore, in discoursing upon this question, I shall endeavour to shew what kind of thoughts and notions we ought to have of God, that so we may understand what we mean, when we speak of him, who is here call'd *the Lord*. To which, nothing will contribute more, than a due consideration of the name whereby he is here call'd, which, in the original, is, *Jehovah*, as we commonly pronounce it; altho we are not certain how it ought to be pronounced, it being made up wholly of consonants, without any vowels of its own: For those which are commonly affixed to it, are plainly borrowed from another word, as they who are skill'd in that language know full well. Howsoever, that is not so material, as to understand the proper sense and meaning of this great name, whereby Almighty God hath been pleas'd to reveal and manifest himself unto us: And which he therefore calls his own name, in a more peculiar manner; *I am the Lord*, saith he, *Jehovah, that is my name*, Isa. xlii. 8. *And they shall know that my name is Jehovah, the Lord*, Jer. xvi. 21. From whence we may see his meaning, when he said unto Moses, *Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations*, Exod. iii. 15. That is, the first, *Jehovah*, or the *Lord*, is my name; the other, even the *God of your fathers*, is my memorial, or that which shall alway put me in mind of the covenant which I have made with your fathers. And hence it is, that this is call'd יהוה the name, Lev. xxiv. 11. as far exceeding all other names, as being proper and peculiar only to the true God. Other things are sometimes call'd Gods, but nothing is, or can be call'd *Jehovah* but only the Almighty Creator of the world. *That men may know*, saith David, *that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most High over all the earth*, Psal. lxxxiii. 18.

BUT to understand the proper meaning of this name, and what kind of thoughts it suggests to our minds concerning God, it will be necessary to consider the etymology, and the common use of it in holy writ. As for the etymology, it plainly comes from a word that signifies *to be* in general; and therefore the most high God, calling himself by this name, even *Jehovah*, he thereby gives us to understand, that he would not have us to apprehend him as any particular or limited being, but as *Being* in general, as the *universal Being* of the world, that gives essence and existence unto all things in it. And hence it is, that when Moses ask'd God his name, he said, *I AM THAT I AM*, and thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I AM hath sent me unto you*, Exod. iii. 14. He doth not say, *I am this*, or that particular thing, but in general, *I AM*, and *I AM THAT I AM*. Whereby he plainly interprets his great name *Jehovah*, which may be accordingly rendered in the third Person, *He is*, or *Being* it self, without any restriction or limitation; or, as St. John explains it, ὁ ὢν, ὁ ἦν, καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *who is, who was, and who is to come*, Rev. i. 4. Where, tho he useth several words, yet he useth all but as one name

of God, (as is plain from the *Greek*) and that can be no other than *Jehovah*, which signifies all that is contain'd in those words; and which was therefore rightly interpreted by the *Greek* philosophers, $\delta \omega \nu$ and $\tau \delta \delta \nu$. And I know not how we can better render it in *English*, than by *the Being*.

BUT why then do our translators always render it *the Lord*? The reason is, because the *Septuagint*, or seventy learned men that first translated the old testament, or at least the *Pentateuch*, out of *Hebrew* into *Greek*, wheresoever they met with this great name of God, *Jehovah*, they always render'd it by $\kappa \upsilon \rho \iota \varsigma$, which being derived from $\kappa \upsilon \rho \omega$, *to be*, was the most proper word in all the *Greek* language, whereby to express the true meaning of it. But this word $\kappa \upsilon \rho \iota \varsigma$, being, in process of time, used to signify a lord or governor; and being so used also in other places, both of the old and new testament, therefore our translators also, all along, render *Jehovah*, by *the Lord*. But that the reader may always know, when it is the proper name of God, they took care, that whenssoever *Jehovah* was used in the original text, *the Lord* is always written in capitals or great letters; so that whenssoever you read the Lord so written, you may conclude, that it signifies *Jehovah*, (which is more than can be said of any other translation, that ever I saw or heard of:) As in my text, *the Lord*, you see, is written all in great letters, which shews that in the original it is, *Jehovah reigneth*. And so all over the old testament. But wheresoever the original hath any other word that signifies a lord, there *Lord* is always written in smaller characters, on purpose to distinguish it from *Jehovah*.

BUT for our better understanding the meaning of this great name *Jehovah*, there are several things much to be observ'd in the use of it all along in the holy writ: As *First*, That it is never used with any genitive case after it, except *Sabaoth*, or hosts. He is never call'd *Jehovah*, the Lord of angels, of men, of heaven, of earth, but always simply, or absolutely, *Jehovah, the Lord*. It is true, in this very *Psalms* he is call'd *the Lord of all the whole earth*, ver. 5. But in the original it is not *Jehovah*, but $\alpha \rho \chi \eta$, and therefore it is written in smaller characters, as other words are, not as in my text, where the Lord is written all in great letters; to shew, as I observed before, that the *Hebrew* word is *Jehovah*, which signifying *Being* in general, cannot properly have any particular genitive case after it; for that would restrain it to some particular thing, as if he should be call'd *Jehovah*, the Being of the earth, that would imply as if he himself was the very Being of the earth, or at least, as if he gave being to that in a more particular manner than to any thing else; whereas he equally gives being to every thing that is, and is himself not the being or essence of any thing, but Being in general, the Being of all beings. And that is the reason why, altho he is never call'd *Jehovah, the Lord* of any thing else, yet he is frequently call'd, *the Lord of hosts*, or *Sabaoth*, because *Sabaoth* or *hosts*, most properly signifies all things; all things in the world, in their several ranks and orders, being as so many hosts or armies, which he, as *Generalissimo*, commands and governs. And hence it is, that *Plato* seems to have borrow'd that notion of God, when he call'd him $\delta \nu \delta \nu \omega \nu$; the Being of beings; that being the most proper signification of this divine expression, *The Lord of hosts*.

BUT here we may farther observe, that altho *Jehovah* hath *Sabaoth*, or *hosts*, often following, yet it is never chang'd according to the idiom of the *Hebrew* tongue in the like cases. For when any other word hath a genitive case following it (especially such as end in η , as this doth) it admits of some variation at the end of it, whereby it is known to have so; whereas this never admits of any, but is always just the same, wheresoever it occurs; as God himself is, whatsoever he doth; which shews, that this name is properly adapted, and used in a peculiar manner, to represent him to us, with whom is no variableness or shadow of change.

ANOTHER thing worthy our observation, in this name, is, that it is always used by it self, without any adjective joined with it. God is often call'd a wise, a merciful, an almighty, eternal God, but never a wise, a merciful, an almighty, an eternal *Jehovah*, but absolutely *Jehovah, the Lord*, at least in the original; and if it be otherwise in any translation, it is certainly a great mistake: And the reason is, because every adjective implies something added to the word it is joined with; whereas nothing can be added to *Jehovah*, all properties and perfections whatsoever being fully contain'd in the word it self: For that signifying, as I have observ'd, *Being* in general, it must needs comprehend under it,

wisdom, and power, and greatness, and glory, and goodness, and justice, and mercy, and immensity, and eternity, and all other perfections that are, or have any being at all. And therefore it would be very improper, to add any one or more of them to that name under which they are all contain'd; except it be unity it self, which doth not signify any particular property, but the absolute perfection of the divine Essence it self, and its identity and equality in the three Persons which subsist in it: As where it is said, *Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*, Deut. vi. 4. Where the word *אלהים*, which we translate *God*, being in the plural number, plainly signifies the three persons, of which it is here said, that they are *one Lord, one Jehovah, one Being*; that is, altho they be distinguish'd from each other by their personal properties, yet they have all one and the same individual essence. And hence it is that all, and every one of them, are equally called *Jehovah*, the Lord; even the Son and the holy Ghost, as well as the Father. As Jer. xxiii. 6. it is said, that the Saviour of the world shall be called *יהוה צדקנו*, *The Lord our Righteousness*, which can be understood of none but the Son, *who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness*, 1 Cor. i. 30. and who is therefore expressly called *The Lord*: And so he is in many other places of the old testament. And as for the holy Ghost, the prophets all along call him the Lord; saying, *Thus saith the Lord*: For seeing they spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost, 2 Pet. i. 21. it must needs be he whom they call the Lord, whensoever they use that divine expression.

AND besides, he is call'd *one Lord* also, in respect of the properties or perfections which are commonly attributed to him. For altho, as I observ'd before, he is never call'd a wise, a merciful, an almighty *Jehovah*, nor hath this name any other adjective, except *one*, ever join'd with it; yet these and all other perfections are usually predicated upon it; so that it is often said, that *Jehovah* is wise, and merciful, and almighty, and good, and just, and eternal, and the like. But howsoever these perfections are severally attributed to him; yet really, as they are in him, they are Himself, one Lord, one Being. And all the difference or distinction there is betwixt them, is only in our different apprehension of this one Being; which acting severally upon several objects, we apprehend it as acting from several properties, by reason of the finiteness of our understandings, which cannot conceive of an infinite Being, wholly as it is in it self, but as it were by piecemeal, as it represents it self to us: Whereas, if we could look upon God as he is in himself, we should see all perfections whatsoever so concentred in him, that they are all one and the same perfection; and so he is still, simply and absolutely, without any mixture or composition, *one Jehovah, one Lord*.

I SHALL observe only one thing more at present concerning this great name, and that is, that although God never promiseth to be *Jehovah* to us, nor is ever call'd *our Lord*, but only *our God*, yet he often makes use of this name to confirm what he saith or promiseth to his people, saying, *I am the Lord*—As we see all along both in *Moses* and the prophets. And this doubtless is the highest asseveration that can be made of any truth: For when God saith, *I am the Lord*, it is as much as if he should say, what I now say, is as certain, as that I am the Lord; and I who say it, being the Lord, Being it self, whatsoever I say must needs be just as I say it; so that it is absolutely impossible it should be otherwise. And thus he himself interprets it, saying, *I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed*, Mal. iii. 6. that is, I being the Lord, I cannot change, and therefore what I say cannot but be as I say it shall: And that is the reason, why ye sons of *Jacob* are not consum'd, because I have promis'd ye shall not be consum'd, and have confirm'd that promise by my great name, saying, *I am the Lord*.

THIS observation duly consider'd will give great light to many obscure places, and particularly to that where we read, *And God said unto Moses, I am the Lord. And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them*, Exod. vi. 2, 3. That which makes this place so difficult, is, because this name of God, *Jehovah*, was certainly known to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; for God often us'd it when he spake to them, and they too when they spake to him. How then could it be here said, *By my name Jehovah was I not known unto them*? To understand this, we may consider, that, when God enter'd into covenant with *Abraham*, he said unto him, *אני אל שרי*, *I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect*. As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, &c. Gen. xvi. 1, 2. Where he plainly useth this expression,

pression, *אני אל שדי*, *I am God Almighty*, to confirm his covenant, that *Abraham* might more firmly believe, that he was able to perform what he promis'd, seeing he was God Almighty. Before this, God had said to *Abraham*, *I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees*, Gen. xv. 7. And afterwards he said to *Jacob*, *I am the Lord God of thy father Abraham, and the God of Isaac, the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed*, Gen. xxviii. 13. In both which places, tho he uses this expression, *I am the Lord*, yet he adds something else to it, to make up the proposition; and we never find it us'd by it self, for the confirmation of what he said, till the place above-mentioned, *Exod. vi. 2*. Where God first of all saith *I am Jehovah*, or, *I am the Lord*. And therefore the meaning of what follows must needs be this, that God appear'd to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, so as to confirm his promise to them, by saying, *I am God Almighty*, but not by his name *Jehovah*, saying, *I am Jehovah*, or, *I am the Lord*, as he doth now to the children of *Israel*. So that tho they did know this to be his name, yet they did not know that God would establish his covenant with them by it, as he doth now, saying, *I am the Lord*. And I am the more induced to believe this to be the true meaning of the place, because God is pleas'd both to begin and end what he here promiseth, by this expression. And tho it was never used before, yet from this time forward, nothing is more frequent, both in *Moses* and the *Prophets*, than for God to confirm what he saith to his people, by saying, *I am the Lord*.

FROM what we have hitherto briefly discours'd concerning this great and glorious name, whereby the most high God is pleas'd to reveal himself to us in his holy word, and particularly in my text, calling himself *Jehovah*, the *Lord*, we may easily gather, what kind of thoughts he would have us, his creatures, entertain in our minds concerning him; that when we think of him, we must raise our thoughts above all things else, and think of him as the universal Being of the world, that gives essence and existence to all things in it: As *Jehovah*, the Being, in whom we particularly, as well as other things, live and move, and have our being: As *Jehovah*, the Lord-paramount over the whole world, to whom all the angels and arch-angels in heaven, with all the kings and kingdoms upon earth, are entirely subject: As *Jehovah*, in whom all perfections are so perfectly united, that they are all but one infinite perfection: As *Jehovah*, knowledge it self, always actually knowing all things that ever were, or are, or will be, or can be known: As *Jehovah*, wisdom it self, always contriving, ordering, and disposing of all, and every thing, in the best order, after the best manner, and to the best end that is possible: As *Jehovah*, power, omnipotence it self, continually doing what he will, only by willing it should be done, and always working either with means, or without means, as he himself sees good. As *Jehovah*, light and glory it self, shining forth in, and by, and thro every thing that is made or done in the whole world: As *Jehovah*, holiness, purity, simplicity, greatness, majesty, eminency, super-eminency it self, infinitely exalted above all things else, existing in, and of himself, and having all things else continually subsisting in him: As *Jehovah*, goodness it self, doing and making all things good, and so communicating it self to all his creatures, as to be the only fountain of all the goodness that is in any of them: As *Jehovah*, justice and righteousness it self, giving to all their due, and exacting no more of any, than what is absolutely due to him: As *Jehovah*, mercy it self, pardoning and forgiving all the sins that mankind commit against him, so soon as they repent and turn to him: As *Jehovah*, patience and long-suffering it self, bearing a long time, even with those who continue in their rebellions against him, waiting for their coming to a due sense of their folly and madness, that he may be gracious and merciful to them: As *Jehovah*, love and kindness, and bounty it self, freely distributing his blessings among all his creatures, both good and bad, just and unjust, those that love him, and those that love him not: As *Jehovah*, truth and faithfulness it self, always saying as he means, always doing what he saith, always performing what he promiseth to his people: As *Jehovah*, infinitude, immensity it self, in all things, to all things, beyond all things, every were wholly, essentially, continually present: As *Jehovah*, constancy, immutability, eternity it self, without any variableness, or shadow of change; yesterday, to day, and for ever the same. In a word, when we think of the most high God, Father, Son, and holy Ghost, we should think of him as *Jehovah*, Unity in Trinity, Trinity in Unity, three Persons, one Being, one Essence, one Lord, one *Jehovah*, blessed for ever. This is that glorious, that Almighty Being, which the *Psalmist* here means, when he saith, *The Lord reigneth*.

The word in the original, מלך, which we translate *reigneth*, is commonly used to signify the exercise of supreme authority and power; especially that which is originally, and most eminently in God himself, who is therefore frequently said to reign. As, *The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty: The Lord is clothed with strength*, Psal. xciii. 1. *The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble*, Psal. xcix. 1. And this is that which he would have all people take special notice of, *Say ye among the heathen, the Lord reigneth*, Psal. xcvi. 10. But the word is commonly used also of sovereign princes and emperors upon earth, who derive their titles from it, being called מלכ, persons that reign, or, as we translate it, *Kings*. And therefore God himself is pleased to call himself a great King, Psal. xcv. 3. *The King of glory*, or the glorious King, Psal. xxiv. 8, 9, 10. And absolutely, *The King*. *Mine eyes*, saith the prophet, *have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*, Isa. vi. 5. And our blessed Saviour hath taught us to acknowledge this in our daily prayers to God, saying, *For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Thine is the kingdom*, thou reignest in a more special and peculiar manner, than any other persons can be said to do. *Thine is the kingdom*, so as that in comparison with thee, none else can be said to reign at all.

BUT that we may the better understand the nature of this kingdom, and so in what sense it is here said, that *the Lord reigneth*; we shall by his assistance, consider,

1. THE extent of it.
2. THE title he hath to reign over it.
3. THE laws whereby he governs it.
4. THE form of its government, or the way and manner whereby he reigns over it.

First, THEREFORE, This kingdom over which the Lord reigneth, is of very large extent, for it is spread over the face of the whole earth: As king David himself confesseth, saying, *God is the King of all the earth*, Psal. xlvii. 7. and xcvi. 1. So that all the kingdoms, states, empires, and commonwealths that are in *Europe, Asia, Africa, or America*, or in the unknown parts of the earth, they are all but parcels of God's kingdom, who disposeth of them, and sets over them whom he pleaseth: As Daniel told king Nebuchadnezzar, that God *removeth kings, and setteth up kings*, Dan. ii. 21. And so did the holy One that appeared to him, acquainting him, *that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*, chap. iv. 17. Yea, God himself asserts the same thing to his own people, by his prophet, saying, *I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath*, Hof. xiii. 11. From whence it appears, that all the kings and emperors upon earth, altho they be sovereign princes in respect of one another, yet they are all subject to the Lord of hosts, and hold their crowns and scepters of him, and that too, only during his pleasure. They are all but his vicegerents, or deputies, receiving their power and commission wholly from him; and therefore are bound to do him homage both for the kingdoms over which they reign, and for all the authority they have, or can exercise in them. *By me*, saith he, *kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth*, Prov. viii. 15, 16. They are all but his commissioners, and as he gives, so he can take away their commissions when he will: And while they hold it, they hold it so perfectly under him, that they cannot go beyond it if they would: For *the hearts of kings are in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth them whithersoever he will*, Prov. xxi. 1. Tho he puts great power into their hands, yet he holds both them and their hearts too, so that they cannot design, much less execute, any thing beyond their commission: As our Lord himself told Pilate, saying, *Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above*, John xix. 11. And therefore no people upon earth are in such perfect subjection and vassalage to their princes, as their princes are to Almighty God, who hath absolute dominion over their souls, as well as their bodies: For *he cuts off, or refrains, the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth*, Psal. lxxvi. 12. And hence it is that he is called *the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords*, 1 Tim. vi. 15. Rev. i. and ch. xix. 16. Because all the kings upon earth are his subjects, and their kingdoms but part of his.

YEA, and but a very small part too; for his kingdom is not confined to the earth, but reaches as high as heaven, and spreads it self over the whole world. Indeed, heaven is the chief seat of his kingdom; as he himself saith, *Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool*, Isa. lxvi. 1. So that this part of his kingdom exceeds the other, as much as the throne a king sits on, exceeds the footstool whereon he stands. And so it doth, not only in respect of the quantity, the earth being but a very little inconsiderable thing in comparison of heaven; but likewise in respect of the quality of it: For as there are an innumerable company of inhabitants in heaven, the least of them excels the greatest kings and emperors upon earth, in power and glory; they being all endowed with all the perfections that creatures are capable of; perfectly wise and prudent, perfectly good and holy, perfectly pure and happy. There are angels, arch-angels, cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, all most mighty, most excellent, most glorious princes indeed: And yet they are all subject to this Almighty King, the Lord. They are but his ministers of state, waiting continually upon him, and performing their homage to him, by prostrating themselves before him, and being ready, upon all occasions, to receive and execute his commands; as we learn from the holy Spirit of God, saying, by *David*, *Bless the Lord, ye angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearken unto the voice of his word*, Psal. ciii. 20. Hence they are called *πνευματικά πρὸς δούλους*, *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation*, Heb. i. 14. And are charged to keep such in all their ways, Psal. xci. 11. It is true, this may seem to us but a mean employment for such glorious creatures as they are; but howsoever, they do it with all the cheerfulness and alacrity imaginable, looking upon every thing as great that God commands, and accounting themselves happy to be employed by him in any thing. And therefore they live in perfect obedience and subjection to him, without ever neglecting or transgressing any of his commands, but doing every thing just as he would have it done; by which means they always enjoy his love and favour, and have the light of his countenance shining continually upon them; and so are as happy as it is possible for creatures to be. And tho their number be vastly great of themselves, so great, that I question whether they themselves can reckon it up; yet it is very much augmented by the spirits of just men, who departing out of this life, in the true faith and fear of God, are made equal to them, and fellow-subjects with them in this kingdom of heaven, over which the Lord reigneth.

BUT many of those, who were at first planted in the kingdom of heaven, rebelled against their Almighty King; who therefore banished them from thence, and hath reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day, Jude 6. These therefore being thus condemned to the infernal pit, constitute there a kind of a kingdom, or rather a conspiracy and combination of wicked spirits, of so great power and malice, that they are called *principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickednesses in high places*, Eph. vi. 12. And the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, ch. ii. 2. Now these go about daily seeking whom they may devour, doing all they can to keep mankind in darkness, entice them into sin, or withdraw them from their duty to God. But tho they go about for these wicked purposes, they always go in chains, fetter'd and hamper'd by the Lord, so that they can do nothing without his order or permission, who employs them only as his executioners, to execute his judgments upon impenitent and obdurate sinners like themselves. But he still keeps so strict a rein over them, that they cannot stir a jot farther than he suffereth them. They could not meddle with *Job's* goods till they had obtain'd a licence from God, nor with his body afterwards, until their licence was enlarged, *Job* i. and ii. Yea, a whole legion of them could not so much as enter into swine, without *Christ's* leave, *Mark* v. 12. Which plainly shews, that altho it be against their wills, yet they are kept in perfect subjection to the Lord, *Jehovah*, who reigneth as absolutely over them as any other creatures whatsoever. And they certainly of themselves are very many; and yet their number also is increased by a great part of mankind, who dying in their sins, are condemned to live for ever in the company of these fiends of hell; whereby this kingdom of darkness, though it be not so great as that of light, it is doubtless of vast extent; and yet nevertheless it is but one part of that over which the Lord reigneth.

FOR he reigneth not only over all the kingdoms of men, of holy and of apostate angels, but likewise over all things else: As *David* in his prayer to him confesseth, saying, *Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both honour and riches come of thee, and thou reignest over all*, 1 Chron. xxix. 12. He reigneth over all, not only rational, but mere sensitive and inanimate creatures too, and doth whatsoever he will with all, and every one of them. *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he*, saith *David*, in heaven, in the earth, in the seas, and in all deep places, Psal. cxxxv. 6. And good reason why he should do what he will with every thing; for all things are his. *The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is; the compass of the world, and they that dwell therein*, Psal. xxiv. 1. The earth is of it self of very great extent, being commonly reckoned to be above 21000 miles round; and it hath a vast company of beasts living upon it, birds flying about it, fishes swimming in its waters, insects creeping on its plants, stones, metals, semi-metals, minerals, and many other things engendered in its bowels, from the surface to the center; which are all under the inspection and care of Almighty God, who orders and disposeth of them as he pleaseth: And this one would think was a very large kingdom for one to reign over. But what then shall we think of the prodigious compass of the heavens? What vast bodies are the sun and moon, and stars that are in it? What a vast number is there of them? And what a vast space is there between them, and beyond them too? Who can think of this without astonishment and admiration! And yet all this is the Lord's; and so the system of the whole world is his, and all and every thing that is in it, belongs to that kingdom, over which, as it is here said, *the Lord reigneth*.

AND certainly he hath all the right and title in the world to reign over the world, and all things in it, seeing the world and all things in it were made by him, as appears from the first words of the bible, *In the beginning God created heaven and earth*, Gen. i. 1; where by *heaven and earth*, according to the idiom of the Hebrew language, is meant the whole world and all things in it. It was all created by God in the beginning, and by consequence out of nothing: For though we should grant that the Hebrew word *ברא*, which we translate *created*, doth not always signify the production of a thing out of nothing, yet that must needs be the meaning of it in this place: For if there had been any thing before, out of which the world was made, there must have been a beginning before; and then it could not have been said, that *In the beginning God created heaven and earth*. But it is expressly said, that he did it in the beginning, and therefore it could be no otherwise than out of nothing: And this is the first great truth that God is pleased to reveal unto us in his holy word, as being the foundation of all true religion; the grand reason of that obedience, subjection and homage which all creatures owe to God, being grounded upon this, That they are created or produced out of nothing by him; they are his creatures, and therefore must needs be subject to him, and do what he commands, from whom they receive their being, and all the power they have of doing any thing. This is the reason which *David* gives, why *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*; because *he founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods*, Psal. xxiv. 1, 2. he made it, therefore it is wholly his: And if it be his, it must needs be at his command, he may do with it what he pleaseth. The same may be said of the whole world, it is all the workmanship of his hands, and therefore is wholly under his care and government.

ESPECIALLY, considering that he did not only make all things at first, but continually preserveth and upholdeth all things in their being, by the same Almighty word whereby he made them, Heb. i. 3. He made all things at first, by saying they should be; and so he continueth all things in their being, by saying or willing they should continue. He said, *Let there be light, and there was light*: And should he once say, let there be no light, there would be no light, but all the lights of heaven would immediately go out, and darkness would overspread the face of the whole world. Yea, should God but cease to keep any thing in its being, or not actually will it to be, it would, in the twinkling of an eye, fall down to nothing, or soon cease to be. Hence the apostle saith, that *in him we live, and move, and have our being*, Acts xvii. 28. It is in him we live; for it was he that breathed the breath of life into us, and so united our souls to our bodies; and it is he that keeps them so united. It is he that gives us food, and it is he that gives his blessing unto it,

that

that it may nourish and preserve us alive: It is in him we move either our souls or bodies: It is in him that we understand, or think, or chuse, or love, or hate, or exercise any other passion: It is in him that we walk, or stir either our heads, or hands, or feet, or any other part of our body: Yea, it is in him that we are, or have our very being; so that we cannot subsist, or be one moment without him; but we, and all the creatures in the world, depend continually upon him, and are continually beholden to him, not only for what we have, and for what we are, but for that we are at all. And seeing all things thus continually derive their very being from him, he must needs have absolute power and dominion over all things. And this is the reason which the choir of heaven gives, why the Lord deserves to reign so gloriously as he doth, over the whole world; saying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created*, Rev. iv. 11. As if they should have said, thou art worthy, O Lord, to reign over all things, and to be glorified and honoured by all things; because all things were not only created by thee, but all things continually are, or subsist in thee: yea, all things are both made and preserved, *διὰ τὸ θέλημα σου*; for thy pleasure, or rather for thy will, because thou wouldst have it so. So that both the first production of all things out of nothing, and the continual preservation of them in their being, depends wholly and solely upon the will of God, and therefore must needs be subject to him.

BUT why did God make all things? *He did it*, as the wise man saith, *for himself, for his own sake*, Prov. xvi. 4. that is, for the exercise and manifestation of himself. He was infinitely happy in himself before he made the world, and therefore could have no other end in making of it, but only that he might thereby communicate of his goodness, and shew forth his glory unto others; which, for that purpose, he made capable of beholding what he hath done, and of reflecting upon that infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, which he exerted in the doing of it. And for the same end it is, that he is still pleased to support and maintain all things in their being, that so his glory might continually shine forth in them, and be acknowledg'd, admir'd, and prais'd by all that see it. But this end could not be accomplish'd, unless he always reigned over all things: For if he did not, some things might fall out otherwise than he designed at first, and so would not answer the end wherefore he made them; whereas, by reigning over the world, he so orders and disposeth of every thing in it, that all things concur to promote his great and holy design, by setting forth the glory of his divine perfections. And therefore it must needs be acknowledg'd, that there is all the reason in the world, that he should reign over all things in the world, that so he may accomplish his end in the making and preserving of them.

WHICH brings me to the next thing I promised to shew, by what laws the Lord governs the world, or as it is here expressed, *reigneth over it*. Concerning which, we may observe in general, that they are all such as he in his infinite wisdom saw necessary to be enacted, in order to the better discovery of himself, and the displaying his glory in the world; which was his end, as in making and preserving all things, so likewise in his prescribing laws for every thing to observe: For which purpose therefore he gave certain rules and orders to all things he made, at the same time, and after the same manner that he made them, even by his word: As we see in the first of *Genesis*; where we must distinguish betwixt his saying, *Let such a thing be*, and *let such a thing do so or so*. By the first, he produced the thing out of nothing; by the other, he gave laws to it, then in being. As when he said, *Let there be light*: By that word, the light which was not before, began to be; but when he said, *Let there be lights in the firmament, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years*; ver. 14. he thereby gave laws to the light he had before made, where he would have it be, and what he would have it do. And so, when he said, *Let the earth bring forth grass and herbs, yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed is in it self, after his kind*, ver. 24. *And let the earth bring forth the living creatures after their kind*, ver. 24. he thereby laid his command upon the earth, by vertue whereof it was both impower'd and requir'd to bring forth grass, and every living creature after his kind: And so it hath done ever since. The same may be said of all other parts of the creation; for the Almighty Creator, at the same time that he created any thing, signified his pleasure what he would have it to be, or to do. And this is that which we call the law of nature; that law

which God hath put into the nature of every thing, whereby it always keeps it self within such bounds, and acts according to such rules, as God hath set it; and by that means sets forth the glory of his wisdom and power, and therefore may be properly said to praise or glorify him. Hence it is, that *David* saith, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work*, Psal. xix. 1. And elsewhere, *Praise the Lord, ye sun and moon, praise him, all ye stars of light, praise him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord; for he commanded, and they were created. He hath established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree, which shall not pass*, Psal. cxlviii. 3, 4, 5, 6. That is, he hath so order'd the nature of such things, and decreed such laws to be observ'd by them, as shall never be broken, but shall always be punctually observ'd by them; for otherwise what would become of the world? If the sun, for example, should cease to give its light; if the earth should cease to bring forth grass; if animals should cease to encrease and multiply; the whole frame of the creation would immediately be unhing'd, the world would cease to be what it is, and become a mere chaos again, a dark confused heap, without any form or order, and so would not answer the end of its creation: For the prevention whereof, God hath so firmly establish'd this law of nature in all inanimate and mere sensible creatures, that it can never be alter'd, but all things naturally move and act continually, just as he at first design'd and ordain'd they should.

BUT all these sorts of creatures, altho they are, every one in its place and station, great monuments of the divine perfections, exerted in the framing and government of them; yet they themselves do not know it, not being endu'd with any such principle, whereby to reflect either upon themselves, or him that made them: So that if there had been no other sorts of creatures made, none but God himself could have seen his glory shining in them. Hence therefore he was pleas'd to make other creatures of such a nature, as to be able to understand, acknowledge, and admire his divine wisdom, and goodness, and power, both in themselves, and in all other creatures which he hath made: And they are angels and men.

OF which, the first are purely intellectual or spiritual creatures, endued with power to understand and consider both the works and the commands of God, to distinguish between good and bad, what he would have them do, and what not to do, and to prefer and chuse the one before the other: To whom he hath therefore given another kind of laws suitable to their nature, requiring them to consider and contemplate upon what he hath done; to acknowledge and admire the divine perfections which he exercis'd in the doing of it; and to love, and honour, and praise, and glorify him for all the goodness, and the wonderful works that he hath shew'd to them; and to be ready upon all occasions, not only to do what he commands, but to do it in pure obedience to him: All which, the greatest part of these glorious creatures have always punctually observ'd; and so have always continu'd in his love and favour. But some of them swelling with the conceit of their great power, and abusing it so far as to transgress his laws, were immediately disgrac'd and cast into prison, into the pit of hell; where, altho they never willingly obey his commands, yet their hands are so ty'd, that they can do nothing but what he permits them. By which means, they also live under some kind of government, tho against their wills; being so confin'd and restrain'd by Almighty God, that they can never go beyond the bounds which he hath set them.

THE other sort of creatures which God hath made capable of apprehending, respecting and owning him in all that he hath made or done, are men, partly spiritual, and partly earthly creatures; being angels, as it were, incorporated, or spirits united to matter, so as to make one person with it: And these God was pleas'd so to compose and put together, that the soul, or spiritual part, might always govern and rule over the body, or sensitive part; and so be always employ'd, as the holy angels are, in loving and trusting on God, in rejoicing in him, adoring, admiring, and praising, and giving him thanks for his great glory and goodness, and the rest of his perfections; and in imitating of him, as near as their finite capacities would reach, in being just, and merciful, and pure, and holy, and perfect, as he is. And so long as man continued in this state, he need-
ed no other revelation of his duty, his own natural constitution inclining him

continually to think, and speak, and do as God would have him. And altho by the fall of the first man, the nature of man in general be very much disorder'd, and out of tune; yet there is so much still left of the first disposition, that they who have no other law, are still *a law unto themselves*, in that they *do by nature the things contained in the law*, and thereby shew *the law is written in their hearts*, as the apostle observes, *Rom. ii. 14, 15*. But this law written upon the fleshly tables of man's heart, being so blotted and defaced by the fall, that none could read and understand it perfectly; God was afterwards pleased to transcribe it upon two tables of stone, in that which we now call the decalogue, or ten commandments, all which are plainly nothing but a transcript of that law which was first inscrib'd in man's nature, except the fourth, or last of the first table, which God was pleased to add to the other three, by a positive command: And that seems to be the reason wherefore he requires us to remember that, saying, *Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy*; which is more than he saith concerning any other of his commandments; because, that not being written in the heart, but only proclaim'd in their ears, mankind might be apt to forget it, unless they had a particular caution to remember it, at the return of every seventh day, that God had commanded to keep it holy. Whereas the other being only written in our natures, we could not be said properly to remember, but to be sensible of them, or conscious to our selves that we ought to observe them, whether we are ever put in mind of them by any one else, or no: For if we do but look into our hearts, we may there see, or rather feel our selves bound to love and serve God, to honour our parents, and the like. But tho all people have some such sense of their duty left them, yet generally it is so little, that it doth not put them upon the practice of it. And hence it is, that God promiseth in the new covenant, to quicken and actuate it, saying, *I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their heart*, *Jer. xxxi. 33*. That is, he will write his law in our hearts, as he did first, by giving us so quick and strong a sense of our duty to him, as shall excite and stir us up to the sincere performance of it; which he doth by expounding it to us in the old and new testament, and by his holy Spirit co-operating with the means of grace, which, for that purpose, he hath settled in his church. By this law, thus written at first upon their hearts, and then upon two tables of stone, and explained in the old testament by the prophets, in the new by Christ and his apostles; by this law, I say, it is, that God governs and will judge mankind; and therefore by it he may be properly said to reign over this lower world, the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof.

THE next thing I promised to consider, is, the form of that government which the Lord exerciseth; how and after what manner it is that he reigns over the world. Which I must confess to be a very hard question, yea, impossible to be perfectly resolved by any, much more by us in our imperfect state; every thing relating to this divine government, being matter of wonder, rather than of discourse, and ratiocination. For it is not like the government of any city, or nation, or kingdom upon earth, but quite of another nature; and that too, so high, mysterious, and divine, that altho we be continually subject to it, we can apprehend but very little of it. *David* himself, in this very place, having asserted, that *the Lord reigneth*, he adds in the next verse, that *clouds and darkness are round about him*; intimating that he reigns so insensibly and unintelligibly to us, that we are all in the dark about the way and manner of his reigning: inso-much that the great apostle himself, considering his wonderful way of working in the world, was forced to cry out *ὦ βάθος*, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out?* *Rom. xi. 33*. Which may be truly asserted, not only of the amazing revolutions of kingdoms and empires, and other great affairs of the world, but even of those which we think little and common: For those things which seem little or common to us, are manag'd and order'd by the same infinite wisdom and power, that ordereth and manageth the greatest and rarest things in the world, yea the whole world it self. And could we take a fair prospect of them, we should see the same divine perfections shining forth in one thing as well as another. But, alas! we are so short-sighted, that we can perceive but very little of the most plain and obvious things that are before us; and at the best, but only the surface, and some few circumstances belonging to them. We cannot look so far as into the nature of any one thing, much less be-
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hold the rare contexture and dependence of one thing upon another; how every thing concurs to the preservation of all things, and all things to the good of every thing. Least of all are we able to reach so high as to behold the hand that moves this great chain of second causes, so as to make all and every thing produce what he pleaseth: And if we offer at it, we are presently at a loss, amaz'd, confounded at the infinite height of it, and his wonderful ways of working together with all things so infinitely below him. And therefore expect not that I should give you any particular account of God's way and method in governing the world; or how it is that he reigns over it: but you must content your selves with such general notions of it, as may affect your hearts with joy and gladness for it; such as these,

1. He reigns absolutely, without controul, receiving his power from none, nor being accountable to any for the exercise of it: for he hath it immediately from himself, or rather he hath it all originally, essentially in himself: His power being indeed the same with his will; so that he doth whatsoever he will, only by willing it should be done. And therefore the apostle saith, *Who hath resisted his will*; Rom. ix. 19. None certainly ever did or can resist it: For there can be no resistance without power to make it, but there is no power but what comes from God; and therefore none be sure can ever be exerted against him: but, as the Psalmist saith, *He doth whatsoever he pleaseth*, Psal. cxv. 3. There is no withstanding or gainsaying of him, all things being absolutely subject to his will and pleasure; as the apostle intimates, where he saith, *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour*? Rom. ix. 21. *And who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus*? Ver. 20. And the prophet, *Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth: Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, what makest thou? Or thy work, he hath no hands*, Isa. xlv. 9. Implying, that God hath as much power over every creature, as a potter hath over the clay in his hand, to make what he will of it, and to do what he will with it: As much did I say; yea, he hath infinitely more, all things in the whole world being so perfectly at his command, that nothing can so much as subsist one moment without him.

AND hence it is, that as he reigns absolutely over all things, so likewise over every thing particularly. For we must not apprehend him as residing only in heaven, and from thence issuing forth his commands and commissions for the exercise of his authority in other parts of his kingdom, as earthly princes are forced to do from the place of their residence: No, although he is pleased to unveil himself, and shine forth in all his glory, more especially in the highest heavens, yet he himself is actually present in every part of his kingdom, in one as well as another, and exerciseth his power in and over every thing that is in particular, as well as over all things that are in general; insomuch that no one thing ever did, or ever can happen in the world, without his immediate order or permission: As we may see in those things which seem to us to be mere contingencies, or to fall out by chance, as we say, as not seeing any necessary cause why they should so happen; yet to God there is no such thing, for he himself concurs to the effecting of it. What can depend more upon chance and contingency, than the decision of a matter by casting of lots? and yet the wise man tells us, *That the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is of the Lord*; Prov. xvi. 33. And therefore, when the land of Canaan was divided by lot among the tribes of Israel, God himself is said to have divided it: For it was he that gave to every one his inheritance, Acts xiii. 19. Thus when a man is cleaving wood, and the head of his ax happens to fall off, and kill his neighbour, this may be truly brought in chance-medley, and yet it is expressly said, that *God deliver'd him that was slain into the other's hand*, Exod. xxi. 13. Deut. xix. 5. Many instances of the like nature might be produc'd to prove it; but we need go no further to make it plain and undeniable, than to the words of our blessed Saviour, where he saith, *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father: But the very hairs of your head they are all number'd*, Mat. x. 29, 30. For if every motion of every bird in the air be order'd, and every hair of every man's head be number'd by Almighty God, what can be, or move, or happen in the whole world, without his special care and providence? Nothing certainly; but we may, and ought most certainly, to conclude that he reigns over the world, so as

to order and dispose of every particular thing that happens in it, according to his own will and pleasure.

BUT whatsoever is according to God's will, be sure is good: For his will is always consonant to his infinite wisdom, whereby he contrives all things for the best, in the best manner, and to the best end that can be. But the best end that can be, is his own glory. This is that he propounded to himself in the creation of the world: For he *made all things for Himself*, Prov. xvi. 4. that is, for the setting forth his own glory: And to this end every thing he made did conduce in the highest manner that it was possible for it to do, and therefore was the best that it was possible for it to be. And hence, when he had finish'd the creation, it is said, that *God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good*, Gen. i. 31. that is, every thing was the best in its kind that could be, as contributing as much as it could to the manifestation of his glory, and therefore such as he would have it to be. And the same may be said of every thing that he still doth; it is all very good, as most effectually tending to the great end for which he doth it. It is true, there are many things happen in the world which we can assign no reason for, but wonder how and why they come to pass; but he that is the first and supreme cause of them most certainly designs some great good by them, and makes them as certainly to produce it: Insomuch that if any one thing should happen otherwise than it doth, it would doubtless be much worse for the world, if it did not dissolve the whole fabrick. But there is no fear of that; for it is as impossible that any thing should fall out otherwise than God would have it, as it is impossible for him to do otherwise than well, who being goodness it self, whatsoever he doth, cannot but be well done, yea the best that it was possible for it to be: And altho we cannot dive into the secrets of providence, nor understand the reasons of all the changes and chances which happen in the world; yet ye must conclude in general, that there is great and good reason for all, and every one of them, in that they come from him, whose works are all like himself, infinitely wise and good, who never did, nor can do a vain or ill thing; and therefore must be acknowledg'd to reign over the world both wisely and well: every thing that he doth, being so wisely done, that nothing can be wiser; every thing so well, that nothing can be better.

HENCE also it necessarily follows, that his reign is most perfectly just and righteous. It is true, he hath mercy only on those on whom he will have mercy, but he is just to all indifferently; never punishing any one more, nor rewarding any one less than he really deserves, but rather distributing his punishments so equally, that none hath cause to complain; and his rewards so bountifully, that every one hath cause to thank him, and to say with *David*, *The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 17. which holds good in all cases, without any exception whatsoever: for, as *Abraham* said to him, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Gen. xviii. 25. Yes surely, he always doth that which is most strictly just and right, otherwise he would act contrary to his own will and nature, which is the rule and standard of all justice and equity: So that he never did, nor can do an unjust act. And therefore whatsoever happens to any particular nation or person in the world, how hard soever, or severe, it may seem to our corrupt imaginations, yet we must conclude it to be highly just and equitable: As in the case of *Job*, of whom God himself gave this testimony, that *He was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil*: And yet nevertheless he suffer'd him to be depriv'd of all the comforts of this life in one day. And what did *Job* do? Did he censure God for it? No, but it is particularly observ'd of him, that *in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly*, Job i. 22. whereby is intimated to us, that it is a very foolish thing indeed, for any one to charge God with injustice for any thing he doth: And so certainly it is, it being as impossible for God to be unjust, as it is for him not to be. And therefore he being so infinitely, so essentially just himself, the great kingdom over which he reigneth, must needs be governed according to the strictest rules of justice in every punctilio and circumstance relating to it.

BUT if so, what must we do, and the rest of mankind, who have all rebelled against this the universal Monarch of the world, and so have justly deserved the severest of his judgments to be inflicted upon us? How can we escape the hand of his justice, or avoid the punishments that are due unto us? Blessed be his name, he himself hath found out a way for it: For being equally wise and just, and mer-

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ciful too, he by his infinite wisdom hath so contrived it, as to execute his justice upon our sins, and yet at the same time shew mercy to our persons, or, as the Psalmist words it, *forgive us, altho he take vengeance of our inventions*, Psal. xcix. 9. This is the great mystery reveal'd in the gospel of Christ, which is as a court of equity, erected in this great kingdom, on purpose to mitigate the rigour of the common law, by transferring the punishments our sins have deserved upon another, and his merits upon us for the pardon of them; by which means his justice may have its free course, and yet his mercy also be extended towards us.

For this Almighty, and All-glorious Monarch of the world, having only one Son, begotten of his own essence from all eternity, and so of the same divine nature or substance with himself, he was pleased to send him into this lower world, to take the nature of man upon him, and in it to suffer all the punishments that were due to the sins of mankind, even of all that partake of that nature which he assumed, and in which he suffered: who is therefore said to have *tasted death for every man*, Heb. ii. 9. But he who thus suffered, being both God and Man in one person, altho he suffered only in his human nature, yet that nature being at the same time united to his divine Person, his said sufferings were really more, and of greater value than the sufferings of all mankind could have been, altho every man had undergone the punishment due to his sins, to all eternity. For all their sufferings, how many, how great, how long soever they were, could have been no more than the sufferings of finite creatures; whereas those which he underwent, were the sufferings of a person that is infinite, and therefore could not but be as much as the justice of God could require for the sins of all mankind. And therefore he is said to be a *propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. that is, he, by the one oblation of himself once offered, hath made it so full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of all mankind, that God may now be justly propitious to them, or so merciful as to pardon their sins, and receive them into his favour again, without any violation of his justice: For that being now fully satisfied by Christ's suffering in our nature, it cannot be violated by remitting the punishments which were due to our persons. But God may justly acquit and discharge us from all our sins, and advance us to the same degree of honour and happiness, as he would have done, if we had never offended him. And hence it is, that his government is so mild and gentle, so gracious and merciful, even to his rebellious subjects upon earth, which otherwise must all have died, as they are born in sin, and so have been miserable for ever; whereas now there are none of them, but who, by the means of what Christ hath done and suffer'd for them, may find so much mercy at the hands of God, as to be absolved from all their sins, and restor'd to the love and favour of God, and in him enjoy a perpetual rest and felicity, the highest their nature is capable of. Neither doth he require any great matter of us in order to it, no more than what we may easily do: For all that he requires of us, is only *to repent and believe the gospel*; that is, to do what we can our selves to leave off our former sins, and to put our whole trust and confidence in this our Almighty Saviour, for grace to lead a new life, for God's acceptance of our sincere, tho imperfect endeavours to serve him, for the pardon of all that we have done amiss, for God's receiving us into his favour here, and into the kingdom of heaven hereafter: All which, if we truly believe in Christ, he will most faithfully perform to us, according to the promises he hath made us to that purpose: Inasmuch that upon the account of his merits, and constant intercession for us, God is always ready to be propitious and merciful to us, and as kind and gracious as if he had never been offended with us. And indeed, as no mercy would ever have been shewn to any man, without Christ, so by him there is no mercy whatsoever, but any man upon the terms before said, may have it; Almighty God, for his sake, being so far reconcil'd to mankind, that all men receive some mercies at his hands, and some all they can desire. So that the government which he exerciseth over this lower part of his kingdom, even upon earth, is altogether as merciful, as it is just and righteous.

HAVING thus consider'd the extent of that kingdom over which the Lord reigneth, by what laws, and after what manner he reigneth over it; it will be easy to shew, what I promised in the last place, how the latter part of my text follows upon the former, even, that seeing *the Lord reigneth*, therefore the *earth* may well *rejoice*, and the *multitudes of the isles be glad thereof*; or that it is matter of

great joy to all the inhabitants of this lower world, that the Lord reigneth. For here, by the *earth*, and the *multitude of the isles*, we are to understand all mankind living here below, whether upon the continent or main land, here call'd the earth, or in any of the many Islands that are in the seas; wheresoever they live, whatsoever kindred or family they are of, whatsoever state or condition they are in, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, rich or poor, male or female, they have all cause to rejoice and be glad, that the Lord reigneth. It is true, at that time the Jews were his peculiar people, and therefore he reigned over them in a peculiar manner. But the royal prophet in this place takes no notice of that, but speaks only of that universal authority which he exerciseth over the whole world, wherein all mankind are equally concern'd, as being all equally made and maintain'd by him, and also redeem'd by the blood of his only begotten Son, in whom, as the apostle speaks, *all are one*, Gal. iii. 21. and so are equally interested in the mercifulness, as well as in the justice of his government. And indeed, the *Psalmist* here seems to have a particular respect to this, as without which, the inhabitants of the earth would have no more cause to rejoice that the Lord reigneth, than the devils in hell have, who can never hope for any mercy at his hands; forasmuch as Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. And that seems to be the reason, that the *Psalmist* mentions only the *earth*, and the *isles* belonging to it, not those regions of darkness which we call hell; the inhabitants whereof have no cause to rejoice, but rather to be troubled, as they doubtless are, that the Lord reigneth, by reason of that justice and severity he continually executeth upon them, for their rebellions against him. But as for mankind, who inhabit the *earth*, and the *isles* about it, it must be matter of unspeakable joy to them, that he reigns, who so loved them, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever of them believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. For, as the apostle rightly argues, He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Rom. viii. 32. And seeing he, who is thus infinitely kind and merciful to mankind, reigns over all the whole world, well might the *Psalmist* say, *Let the earth rejoice, let the multitudes of the isles be glad thereof.*

AND certainly, nothing in the world can raise up our souls to so high a pitch of joy and comfort, as a firm belief, and due consideration of this great truth, that the Lord reigneth: As we may easily perceive, if we do but consider, that our souls being of a pure and spiritual nature, they are apt of themselves to be cheerful and pleasant, singing, and praising, and rejoicing in him that made them; and would always be so, if they were not hindered and diverted by false ideas and representations of external objects, which the serious consideration of this great truth would either remove or rectify. There are two things especially, that deprive the soul of true joy and comfort, and make it often sad and disconsolate; and they are, the apprehension of some future danger, and the sense of some present trouble; both which will be corrected or dispersed by this one consideration duly weigh'd.

FIRST therefore, We are apt to be affrighted and cast down at the apprehension of some imminent danger, or some great affliction or calamity that we think ready to fall upon us. If we apprehend any potent and malicious enemies upon earth, striving all they can to undermine and ruin us; this puts us into such frights and fears, that we can take no comfort in our very friends, but are apt to say with David, *I shall now one day perish by the hand of Saul*, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. If we apprehend any great revolutions in the church or state we live in, that are likely to turn all things upside down, this puts us also into such confusion and disorder, as leaves no room for joy or satisfaction in our now private enjoyments. If we apprehend any great loss in our estates, or any likelihood that we may be reduc'd to want and penury, this suppresseth our spirits, so that we can take no pleasure in what we still possess, nor in the hopes we have that it will be continu'd to us. If we apprehend the powers of hell let loose upon us, and Satan standing at our right hand, ready to devour us, this disquiets and disturbs our minds, so that all things seem black and melancholy about us. If we apprehend any dangerous distemper seizing upon us, and threatening to carry us into the other world, this deprives us of all manner of comfort, and makes us spend the residue of our days in grief and sadness, yea, in horror and confusion of mind.

BUT now a constant belief and persuasion that *the Lord reigneth*, will rectify these, and such like false apprehensions of things, and so prevent our being troubled or disquieted about them. For what if we have never so many, and so powerful enemies? What if they conspire together to take away your good name, your estates, your liberty, or your life it self; remember, *the Lord reigneth*, and if he be for you, who can be against you? If he protect you, what harm can fall upon you? He hath the hearts of all your enemies in his hand, and their designs always under his eye, and can wind and turn them as he sees good. He can abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices against you. He can prevent the mischief they hatch against you, or alter the nature of it, so as to make it really good and profitable for you. He can tie up their hands that they cannot act, their tongues that they cannot speak, yea, their very hearts, that they cannot so much as imagine any evil against you. For he reigns over the whole world, and therefore over them, so that they can neither act, nor speak, nor think, nor will, nor love, nor hate, nor stir one jot without him. This is that which made *David* rejoice and triumph in the midst of all his enemies: *The Lord*, saith he, *is my light, and my salvation, whom then should I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes came about me, to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Tho an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; tho war should rise against me, in this will I be confident*, Psal. xxvii. 1, 2, 3. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, tho the earth be removed, and tho the mountains be carry'd into the midst of the sea; tho the waters thereof roar and are troubled; tho the mountains shake with the swelling thereof*: Psal. xlvii. 1, 2, 3. *In God will I praise his word, in the Lord will I praise his word. In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me*, Psal. lvi. 10, 11. As if he had said, in short, *The Lord reigneth*; therefore I will not fear any mortal men, but rejoice and be glad in him continually.

AND what if storms and tempests should be even rais'd against the church, as they lately were, threatening its ruin and destruction? What need we fear, seeing he reigneth, who hath built it upon a rock, and promised that *the gates of hell should not prevail against it*? What then if *the heathen rage*, and the people imagine a vain thing? He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn, the Lord shall have them in derision, Psal. ii. 1, 4. And what if a dark cloud, full of vengeance and fury, hang over the nation or city where we dwell? And what if it should seem ready every moment to empty it self upon us? What need we regard that, when *the Lord reigneth*, who holdeth all the clouds in a balance, and can disperse them with the breath of his nostrils, or send them where he pleaseth? Who stilleth the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people, Psal. lxxv. 7. Who can bring light out of darkness, good out of evil, order out of confusion, and hath promised to do so for his own people.

BUT some perhaps may not be concern'd so much for the publick, as for their own private affairs, being apprehensive of a great decay in their trade, disappointments in their hopes, and losses in their estates, whereby they may be brought into extreme poverty. But why should any one fear that? *The Lord reigneth who giveth fodder to the cattle, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon him*, Psal. cxlvii. 9. *Behold then the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: And are not ye much better than they?* Mat. vi. 26. Behold, what care he takes of the whole creation! How every thing subsists in him, and by him! How constantly he measures out to every one such a proportion of temporal blessings, as he knows to be best for them! Why then should you fear, lest you should be exempted from that general provision he makes for all his creatures? Why rather do ye not rejoice that *the Lord reigneth*, and say, and sing continually with the prophet, *Altho the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation*, Habak. iii. 17, 18.

BUT there are others to whom all these temporal troubles seem, as they are, even as nothing, in comparison of the great danger their souls are in, especially from that subtle, inveterate, and implacable enemy of mankind, the devil, *who goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8.

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AND it cannot be deny'd, but that his cunning is as great as his power, and his malice as either, so that he takes, or makes occasion continually to ensnare and destroy men. But what then? It is not he, but the Lord that reigneth, and that reigneth over him, as well as over any of his other creatures: Yea, and keeps him perpetually in chains and fetters, and that he cannot move a foot or hand, until he hath first obtained leave of the Lord of hosts; as we see not only in *Job*, but also in that remarkable history in the gospel, where a whole legion of devils were forced to come out of a man at Christ's command, and could not so much as enter into swine till he had given them leave to do it, *Mark* v. 13. What then, if all the devils in hell should set themselves against one man, and employ all their agents upon earth, as witches, and wizzards, and such like wretched creatures, to destroy or hurt him? They may as well undertake to dissolve the whole creation, as do him the least mischief imaginable, without God's permission: As *Balaam* found by experience, and therefore said, *Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel*, *Numb.* xxiii. 23. No, if a man live in the true faith and fear of God, the devil may grin at him, and shew his teeth, but can do him no more hurt than a dog doth to the moon, when he barks at it: For such a one lives on high, far above the devil's reach, under the immediate protection of him that reigneth over the whole world, and keeps all the powers of hell in as much subjection, as the weakest insects upon earth.

AND what if we should, as e'er long we shall, be seiz'd by some mortal distemper, that by degrees will dissolve *these earthly tabernacles* we now live in, and make them unfit for our souls to inhabit any longer? *The Lord reigneth*, he always reigneth, he never dies nor decays, but is continually the same, is health in sickness, strength in weakness, life in death it self. Which therefore will be so far from doing us any hurt, that it will but bring us nearer to our chiefest good, and possess us with a clearer vision, and more perfect fruition of his eternal Godhead, who is the only joy, and crown, and glory, and happiness, and life of our immortal souls. And then we shall fully experience what cause we have to *rejoice and be glad that the Lord reigneth*.

THAT the Lord reigneth! Methinks the very repeating of these words, is sufficient, not only to support our spirits against the fear of all future danger, but also to rejoice and delight our hearts in the midst of trouble: For seeing he reigneth, whatsoever our trouble be, we may be confident that he is in it, to bless and sanctify it to us, to comfort us under it, to make us better by it, and in his good time to ease us of it. *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. And he never chasteneth us for his own pleasure, but only for our own profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness*, *Heb.* xii. 6. And what a mighty comfort is this in all our troubles, that they come from the love of God, and are design'd by him to make us like unto himself, holy as he is holy? Whereby our very troubles afford us real matter of comfort, the highest we can ever have, comfort in God himself. And we may always say with *David*, *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul*, *Psal.* xciv. 19. *This is my comfort in mine affliction, for thy word hath quickened me. I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord, and have comforted my self*, *Psal.* cxix. 50, 52.

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AND it cannot be deny'd, but that his cunning is as great as his power, and his malice as either, so that he takes, or makes occasion continually to ensnare and destroy men. But what then? It is not he, but the Lord that reigneth, and that reigneth over him, as well as over any of his other creatures: Yea, and keeps him perpetually in chains and fetters, and that he cannot move a foot or hand, until he hath first obtained leave of the Lord of hosts; as we see not only in *Job*, but also in that remarkable history in the gospel, where a whole legion of devils were forced to come out of a man at Christ's command, and could not so much as enter into swine till he had given them leave to do it, *Mark* v. 13. What then, if all the devils in hell should set themselves against one man, and employ all their agents upon earth, as witches, and wizzards, and such like wretched creatures, to destroy or hurt him? They may as well undertake to dissolve the whole creation, as do him the least mischief imaginable, without God's permission: As *Balaam* found by experience, and therefore said, *Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel*, *Numb.* xxiii. 23. No, if a man live in the true faith and fear of God, the devil may grin at him, and shew his teeth, but can do him no more hurt than a dog doth to the moon, when he barks at it: For such a one lives on high, far above the devil's reach, under the immediate protection of him that reigneth over the whole world, and keeps all the powers of hell in as much subjection, as the weakest insects upon earth.

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in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1. And then being rightly dispos'd for it, God himself will manifest himself unto you, as his only-begotten Son hath assur'd us, saying, *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be beloved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest my self unto him, John xiv. 21.* And when God is once pleased to unveil and manifest himself unto you, then you will soon behold the beauty and glory that shines forth in all his works, and be highly ravished and delighted with it.

BUT for that end, you must look upon this Almighty Being, not only as reigning over the world in general, but as one in whom your selves have a particular interest, thro the merits and intercession of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, stedfastly believing and trusting on him to reconcile this infinite and all-glorious Monarch to you, that he may be your God, your Guide, your Governor, your Father, and so that whatsoever he doth, is really for your good and advantage; which will not only afford you constant matter of rejoicing, but will make you actually to rejoice and be glad that he reigneth, to whom you your selves are so nearly related, and with whom you have so sure a friend as his only-begotten Son, who loved you, and gave himself for you.

BUT in order to the purifying our hearts by such a faith, whereby we may be duly qualify'd and dispos'd to *rejoice* continually, and to *be glad* that *the Lord reigneth*, we must be sure to converse as much as possibly we can with him, in the use of those means which he hath appointed, whereby to make known himself to us, and to incline our hearts to him. We must take all opportunities of praying to him, and of praising his holy name, and of reading and hearing his most holy word, and of receiving the mystical body and blood of his beloved Son: By which means, duly, sincerely, and constantly perform'd, our souls by degrees will be possess'd, and fill'd with a due sense of his divine wisdom and goodness, and the rest of those infinite perfections which he displayeth in the government of the world, and in the ordering and disposal of all and every thing that is in it: And then we shall behold, admire and rejoice in every thing that he doth, and in him that doth it. Which therefore we must strive to do, not only now and then, but continually, so as to have him and his wondrous works, always in our thoughts; still thinking with our selves, when any thing happens to us, or to any other; *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The Lord reigneth*, it is he that hath done this, and therefore I am sure it is wisely and well done. It is my Lord, it is my God and Father that hath brought this to pass, *I will rejoice and be glad in him, I will praise and magnify his name for it.* By thus accustoming our selves to call God to mind upon all occasions, and to look upon him as the first cause of all things, we shall soon learn the divine art of taking comfort in every thing that happens in the world, one as well as another, so as never to be thoughtful or sollicitous about what may, nor troubled for what doth fall out; but in the midst of all the changes and vicissitudes of this mortal life, still to say and sing, not only with our mouths, but from the very bottom of our hearts; *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.*



S E R M O N CV.

God's Omnipresence the best guard against Sin.

PSAL. xvi. 8.

I have set the Lord always before me : because he is at my right Hand, I shall not be moved.

AS we are all conceived and born, so naturally we all live in sin; our whole lives being nothing else, in a manner, but one continued sin against him, in whom we live; against Almighty God, who made us; and who made us on purpose that we might glorify, serve and worship him, by observing those wise and good laws, which he for that purpose hath prescrib'd to us: Whereas we cannot but be conscious to our selves, that we have either totally neglected, or else transgressed, or at least, come so far short of all his said laws, that we have not punctually observed any one of them, since we came into the world, to this day; but have rather *followed the devices and desires of our own sinful hearts*, and have been hurried about by our corrupt humours and passions, which carry us headlong, directly contrary to the rules which God hath set us; so that we are always either *doing what we ought not* to do, or *not doing what we ought*, or at least, not so as we ought to do it; and so no way answer the end of our creation, but live to no purpose in the world, or rather to a very ill one: For instead of serving and glorifying our great Creator, we live in open rebellion against him, and do what we can to reproach and dishonour his sacred name; which is so offensive and displeasing to his divine Majesty, that it is no wonder that he so orders it in his providence, that we meet with many troubles and crosses in the world. It is rather a wonder, that we meet with no more: For if he should punish us according as our sins deserve, he might justly strip us of all the mercies we enjoy, and inflict all manner of judgments upon us: He may justly divest us of our estates, and reduce us to the extremity of want and poverty: He may justly deprive us of our health, and cause us to lie languishing upon a sick-bed all our days: He may justly take all our friends and relations from us, or make them enemies and scourges to us: He may justly blast our credit and reputation in the world, and make us the scorn and derision of all that are about us: Yea, he may justly condemn us immediately to everlasting shame and torment, and not suffer us to breathe any longer in his air, or tread any longer upon his earth, but command us to go out of this place into the infernal pit, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*. If he should lay any, or all of these punishments upon us, we must still acknowledge him to be *just in all his ways, and righteous in all his judgments*: For we have sinned against him, and therefore lie perfectly at his mercy: He may do with us what he pleases, and if he should execute the severity of his wrath upon us, it is no more than what our iniquities have deserved from him.

Now this being our present state and condition by nature, it cannot surely but be worth the while to bethink our selves what to do in it, and to consider, whether there may not be some way found out, whereby we may, at least in some measure,

measure, keep our selves from those sins, which we have hitherto been so apt to fall into, and so prevent those many and great judgments, which God hath threatened, and may justly, every moment inflict upon us for them. That the thing is possible to be done, we know, because others have done it before us: And that we are as capable of doing it as they were, we know likewise, because we have the same power and means to do it, as they had. The only question is, what course they took for the effecting of it; and by consequence, what course we must take, if we desire to do it effectually. For this therefore, our best way will be to consult such, of whom we are fully assured, that they really did it: Amongst whom we cannot but acknowledge *David* to have been one of the most eminent, as being able to say by the Spirit of truth, itself bearing witness with him, *I was also upright before God, and I kept my self from mine iniquity*, Psal. xviii. 23. and who therefore elsewhere saith, *I will not be afraid of ten thousand of the people, that have set themselves against me round about*, Psal. iii. 6. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil*, Psal. xxiii. 4. But how did *David* thus keep himself from sin, yea, from his own, his beloved sin, so as to fear no evil that could befall him for it? What course did he take? What method did he use for the doing of it? To understand that, we need go no farther than my text, wherein he plainly acquaints us with it, saying, *I have set the Lord always before me: because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved*. As if he had said, although by nature I am very apt to be moved from my duty into sin, and so into all the troubles which attend it, yet I keep my self from it, by setting the Lord always before me; for so long as he is at my right hand, I am sure not to be moved, so as to fall either into sin, or any real misery.

THIS therefore being the great means that *David* used, and found so effectual in this case, I shall endeavour to explain it more particularly to you; and for that purpose shall consider,

I. WHAT it is properly to set the Lord always before us.

II. How much this conduceth to our continuing steadfast, both in our duty to God, and in his love and favour towards us, so as not to be moved either to do or suffer any real evil in the world.

I. IN speaking to the *First*, I suppose I need not tell you, whom we are here to understand by the *Lord*; even the Lord of hosts, the most mighty and eternal God, who made all things by the power of his word; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, and ordereth all things in the world, according to the pleasure of his own will; who is not only infinitely wise, and powerful, and great, and just, and merciful, and good, and glorious in all perfections; but infinite wisdom, and power, and greatness, and justice, and mercy, and goodness, and glory, and perfection itself: Such infinite wisdom, that in every thing he doth, he proposeth the best ends, chuseth the best means, and useth them in the best manner that can be: Such infinite power, that he can do what he will, by willing it to be done: Such infinite greatness, that he comprehendeth all things, and is comprehended of nothing: Such infinite justice, that he punishes every sin that is committed: Such infinite mercy, that he pardoneth every sinner that repenteth: Such infinite goodness, that every thing he is, or doth, or makes, is good; yea, the best that it is possible for it to be: so that his goodness is over all his works: Such infinite glory, that he displays himself, and shines forth in, upon, through, and beyond all the creatures in heaven and earth: Such infinite perfection, that as he hath infinite perfections in him, so every perfection in him is infinite: And therefore, when we speak of the Lord, we are not to apprehend him as like to any thing we know, but as one infinitely greater, and higher, and better, and holier than any thing that we are able to comprehend; in comparison of whom, nothing else is great, or high, or good, or holy, or any thing at all.

THIS is the Lord, that Almighty God, whom *David* did, and we ought always to set before us: Not as if he were not before us unless we set him there, nor yet as if we could set him before us more than he really is; but we are said to set the Lord before us, when we actually believe, and are fully persuaded, that he is with us, and sees us, as he really is, and doth continually; when we exercise that faith, which, as the apostle saith, *is the evidence of things not seen*, and so possesseth us with as firm a confidence, and as great a certainty, that God is present with us,

as that any thing we see is so, although we cannot perceive him by any of our senses: As *Job* observed of him, saying, *Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, and I perceive him not*, *Job* ix. 11. And the reason is, because our senses cannot perceive any thing but their own respective objects, which are all matter diversly put together, modified, and agitated so, as that each of them may move and affect its proper sense, or that part of our bodies which is fitted for it, by being so composed and ordered, that it is apt to be affected with such particular impressions as are made upon it, and no other. And hence it is, that no sensible object can be perceiv'd by any other than its own proper sense; we can no more see a sound, or hear a colour, than as if there was no such thing in nature.

BUT now God being a most simple and pure Spirit, and so having no body, nor matter in him, he is not a proper object for any of our bodily senses, and therefore can be no more perceived by them, than as if there were no such Being in the world. But is there no way then whereby it is possible to perceive him? Yes surely; we may and ought to perceive him by that spiritual sense, as I may call it, which he hath implanted in us, suitable to his own nature, even by a firm and stedfast belief in him, whereby we are as fully persuaded that he is, as that we are; and that he is wheresoever we are, as that we our selves are there: For this we are fully assur'd of from his own mouth, saying, *Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool*, *Isa.* lxvi. 1. and, *Can any one hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?* *Jer.* xxiii. 24. and by his holy Spirit, speaking in *David*, and saying unto him, *Thou hast set me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; or if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me*, *Psal.* cxxxix. 6, 10. Neither are we assured of this only by his word, but likewise by his works; for all things were made, and all things are continually preserved and governed by him, and therefore nothing be sure can be remote or distant from him: It is in him we live, and move, and have our being; and therefore it is impossible that we should either live, or move, or be any where but where he is: For, to suppose our selves to be where God is not, is to suppose our selves to be, and not to be at the same time; for our very being is in him, and depends altogether upon his presence with us, and so giving existence to us; insomuch that should he withdraw his presence from us but one moment, we should in that moment drop down to nothing, and so cease to be: And therefore nothing can be more present to us than God is, nor indeed so much; he being not only always with us, but in us, and we in him.

AND seeing God is always thus present with us, and in us, we are thereby assured likewise that he being all wisdom and knowledge, must needs be intimately acquainted with every thing we do, with every thing we speak, and with every thing we think, or will, or nill, or desire, or abhor; even with all the several affections and inclinations of our souls, as well as with the several actions, gestures, or motions of our bodies: As *David* saith, *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are but vanity*, *Psal.* xciv. 11. He saw, before the flood, that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, *Gen.* vi. 5. Which he could not have done, had he not seen every thought of every man's heart in the whole world, which he doth more plainly than any man knows what he himself thinks; which therefore every man ought to be constantly assured of, as *David* was, when he said to God, *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me: Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying-down, and art acquainted with all my ways; for there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether*, *Psal.* cxxxix. 1, 4.

AND as there is no man, nor any thing in man, so neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: For all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do; as we read *Heb.* iv. 13. All creatures have to do with God, and he with them: And whether they know him or no, be sure he always knows them, and takes particular notice not only of all things in general, but of every thing particularly; as he did at the beginning of the world, when it is said, that *God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good*, *Gen.* i. 31. So he doth to this day: He continually looks upon every thing that is, what it is,

and where it is, and whether it be good or evil: He every moment sees every angel and glorified saint in heaven; every devil and damned soul in hell; every fowl in the air; every fish in the sea; every animal, and whatsoever else is upon or within the earth, from the highest to the lowest, from the greatest to the least thing that is, *Mat. x. 30.* And among other things he sees every one of us particularly, and knows every thing that every one of us ever thought, or spoke, or did, since we were born, to this moment; and at this moment he looks into every one of our hearts, and sees what we are thinking, and how we are affected with what we hear concerning him: And so he doth, as to every man, woman and child, that ever was, or at this day is upon the face of the earth. How well then may we here cry out with *David, Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it, Psal. cxxxix. 6.* And with *St. Paul, O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Rom. xi. 33.*

FROM hence therefore it appears, what ground we have to believe that God is always certainly present with us, so as perfectly to know every action and circumstance of our whole lives: And so long as we actually think upon, and really believe this, so long we may be truly said to *set the Lord before us*: And such a persuasion as this, will have the same force and power upon us, as if we saw him with our eyes. But that it may have its whole effect, towards the keeping of us from being moved, we are farther to observe, that by *Jehovah, the Lord*, we are here to understand, as the divine Nature in general, so each divine Person subsisting in it, the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, they being all equally one and the same *Jehovah, the Lord*. And therefore in order to our setting the Lord before us as we ought, we must believe that all and every one of these divine Persons is always present with us.

First, WE are to believe that God the Father is always present with us as such, even as he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our God and Father, as Christ himself hath assured us, saying, *I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God, John xx. 17.* And therefore commands us wheresoever we are, to address our selves to him as our Father, saying, *Our Father which art in heaven, &c. Matth. vi. 9.* And soon after tells us, that our *heavenly Father seeth in secret, and knows what things we have need of, ver. xviii. 32.* Whereby he plainly signifies his pleasure, that he would have us set God before us, under that consideration and relation to us, as he is our Father; which will contribute much towards our not being moved at any thing that shall happen to us.

AND as we are to believe God the Father, so likewise God the Son, to be always with us, even the eternal Son of God, who was pleased to become the Son of man too, by assuming our human nature into his divine Person, so as to be both God and man in one and the same person: By which means, although the human nature which he assumed, never was, or can be in any more than one place at once, yet the same divine Person, to which that nature is united, always was, and is, and ever will be in all places, and know all things in heaven and earth. And therefore we read, that when he was in his mortal body upon earth, he was at the same time in heaven, *John iii. 13.* and every where, *Mat. xviii. 20.* He knew the very thoughts of the *Scribes and Pharisees, Mat. ix. 4.* and *xii. 25.* He saw *Nathanael* under the fig-tree, and knew his heart so well, as to say, he was an *Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile, John i. 47.* He knew that the woman of *Samaria* that talked with him, had had *five husbands*, altho she herself said she *had never a one, John iv. 17, 18.* He knew that *Lazarus* was dead, before any body had told him so, *John xi. 14.* He knew which of his disciples intended to betray him, for all that he endeavoured to keep it from him as much as he could, *John xiii. 11.* Yea *St. Peter* appeal'd to his Omniscience, whether he did not love him, saying to our Saviour, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee, John xxi. 17.* and *ii. 24.* And as Christ was thus in all places, and knew all things, whilst his human nature was still upon earth; so when he was to ascend in that to heaven, he promised notwithstanding, that he himself would still continue with his church upon earth, saying to his disciples, *Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20.*

HENCE therefore, although the manhood of Christ be now at the right hand of God in heaven, and will not come down from thence till the end of the world, yet he himself, in his divine Person, to whom that manhood in which he suffered for

for us is united, is alway present with us: So that whatsoever other company we are in, he still makes one; or, if we have no other, be sure we have his company wheresoever we are; and therefore can never be alone: For he that is at God's right hand in his human nature, in his divine is always at ours too, ready to aid and assist us upon all occasions, if we do but make our applications to him, as we well may to one that is never out of sight or hearing. And this I look upon as our great preservative and security from evil and danger, that he who so loved us, as to give himself for us, never leaves us, nor forsakes us, but always keeps close to us, and nearer than any danger or evil can be. For by this means we are always sure of a true and Almighty friend at hand, who *in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted*, Heb. ii. 18. who was once subject to all the infirmities of our nature, but without sin; he was hungry and thirsty, and weary and sleepy; he felt pain and sorrow, and at last the very pangs of death itself; and therefore cannot but be touch'd with the feeling of our infirmities, and know how to give suitable relief to all and every one of them; who also is still in our nature, and therefore cannot but have a great love and kindness for it, and for all that partake of it; yea, who is always interceding for us in heaven, and always present with us upon earth too; and therefore we cannot doubt but he will do all he can for us. And what can he not do for us that he will? And what can he not enable us also to do, when St. Paul could say upon his own experience, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me*? Phil. iv. 13. Which plainly shews, that Christ was always so present with him, as to supply him continually with grace and power to do good, all the good that was required of him. And we certainly may have the same experience as he had, if we do but do as he did, even set Christ always before us, by believing that he is always present and ready to assist us; which, as I have now shewn, we have all the reason in the world to believe, and therefore must act against reason grounded upon God's word, unless we do it.

THE same may be said likewise concerning the third person in the most sacred Trinity, even the holy Ghost, who proceeding from the Father and the Son, and being of the same nature and substance with them, must needs be where they are; that is, wheresoever any thing in the world is: But as to all those who believe in Christ, he is in a peculiar manner with them, according to Christ's own promise, saying unto them, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth*, John xiv. 16. From whence it appears, that the Spirit of God, even as such, doth not only come to us now and then, but makes his constant abode with us; yea, he dwells in us, so as to consecrate our very bodies into temples, places of God's special residence, as the apostle informs the believing *Corinthians*, saying, *What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost which is in you?* 1 Cor. vi. 12. And elsewhere, *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* chap. iii. 16. And if the Spirit of God inhabits, or dwells in us, be sure he is always ready to enlighten our minds, to inform our judgments, to direct our thoughts, to awaken our consciences, to regulate our passions, to purify and comfort our hearts, and to sanctify us wholly in soul, body, and spirit. And we may well set him before us, who is always thus by us, and in us: As *David* did, when he said to God, *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?* Psal. cxxxix. 7. Whereby he himself hath taught us how he did, and we ought to set God alway before us; even by being fully assur'd, that he and his holy Spirit is always with us wheresoever we are; and that it is as impossible for us to be where he is not, as it is for him not to be.

FROM these things therefore duly consider'd, we may easily gather the full sense and meaning of these words, *I have set the Lord alway before me*; according to the exposition which St. Peter himself hath given of them, where he renders them, *I foresaw the Lord alway before my face*, Acts ii. 25. So that in order to our doing of it aright, it is necessary that we firmly believe, and be firmly persuaded in our minds, that the Lord, the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world, is every where; and particularly in the place where we are, just by us, and with us, and in us: That he clearly sees every act we do, hears every word we speak, and knows every thought, passion, and motion of our minds: That he is perfectly acquainted with all our purposes and designs, with what we intend to do, whether we do it or not: That he takes particular notice of every particular action and circum-

circumstance of our whole lives : That God the Father is always present with us, to preserve, maintain, and provide for us : That God the Son is always with us, to defend, govern, assist, and strengthen us : That God the holy Ghost is always present with us, to sanctify, direct, and comfort us. And all this we must believe, not only now and then, but, as it is here express'd, *always* ; so as never to doubt of the truth of these things, nor suffer them to go out of our minds, but to be always acting our faith in God, as present with us, and to be always looking upon him as always looking upon us. And then we may be truly said to *set the Lord always before us*.

AND if he be thus at our *right hand*, we shall *not be moved* ; as David had found by experience, and therefore confidently asserts of himself, *I shall not be moved* : From what ? *A fide ad infidelitatem, à bono ad malum ; from faith to infidelity, from good to evil*, as St. Hierom expounds : And so certainly the words being spoken indefinitely, ought to be understood in their full extent : I shall not be moved upon any account, in any respect whatsoever, from no manner of good, nor into any manner of evil, but shall always remain steadfast and unmovable as a rock, establish'd and supported by that Almighty Power that is always with me.

THE same may be said of all that *alway set the Lord before them* : They shall never be moved, so as to fall into, and live in any gross sin ; they shall never be moved, so as to fail in any necessary duty unto God ; they shall never be moved from a good to an evil state and condition of life : And all, because they *set God alway before them*, and so have him alway at *their right hand* : Which is the other thing I promised to shew, and may easily do it.

FOR, *First*, he who *sets God alway before his eyes*, so as always to be thinking of him that is the only good, how can he so much as think of any thing that is evil ? For this would be to think at the same time of two things directly contrary, yea, contradictory to one another ; which is impossible. But how then can he do any evil, and so act contrary both to him he thinks of, and to his own thoughts of him ? Alas ! the thoughts of God as always present with him fill his soul with such a sense of his greatness and glory, that he cannot but dread the thoughts of doing any thing offensive or displeasing to him ; and can never be moved to do it by any temptation whatsoever : For whensoever he is tempted to any sin, he still considers that God sees him, and saith within himself as Joseph did, *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God ?* Gen. xxxix. 9. And therefore whensoever you commit any sinful act, you may conclude that you did not think of God at that time, nor believe him to be present with you ; as David observed, saying, *The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes*, Psal. xxxvi. 1. That is, every sin that a man committeth, is a plain demonstration to me, that he doth not set God before his eyes ; for if he did, he could not but fear him, so as not to dare to break his laws, and so incense his wrath and indignation against himself ; but would rather abhor himself that he ever hath offended God, and resolve to do so no more ; as we see in Job ; *I have heard of thee, saith he, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes*, Job xlii. 5, 6. Where we may observe what a mighty force the sight of God had upon him, it struck him as it were down, he was not able to stand under it, but fell down into an utter abhorrence of himself before him ; and it was this that kept him from oppressing or injuring the poor, by withholding his alms from them ; as he himself saith, *If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering : If his loins have not blessed me, and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep : If I have lift up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate ; then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone : For destruction from God was a terror to me ; and by reason of his highness I could not endure*, Job xxxi. 19, 20, 23. He saw it seems the highness and majesty of God, which struck such a terror into him, that he could not endure himself, nor the thoughts of doing any thing that might offend him : And so it is doubtless with all who set God always before them ; his presence cannot but strike that awe into them, that they will not dare to break his laws, and so provoke and affront him to his face. As for example :

How can they blaspheme or profane the sacred name of God, who believe at the same time that he hears every word they speak against him, and will certainly one time or other be reveng'd upon them for it ? How can they be high and proud in their own conceit, who believe themselves to be in the presence of the most

High God, who is not only infinitely above them, but hath told them, that he *resists the proud, and gives grace only to the humble*? How can they indulge themselves in lust or luxury, in drunkenness or debauchery, who believe at the same time that God sees them, and will e'er long call them to an account for it? How can they oppress the poor, or wrong their neighbour, by lying, stealing, cheating, or the like, who believe that the eye of God is upon them, and his hand ready to strike them for it? How can they play the hypocrite, and dissemble with God, or retain any revenge, malice, envy, or hatred against their neighbour, who believe that God sees their hearts, and knows how they stand affected, both towards himself, and towards all men? In a word, how can they allow themselves in any vice or wickedness whatsoever, who set God always before them, and believe that the Judge of the whole world takes particular notice of them all the while? A constant belief of this, would soon make them weary of their sins, and turn their inclinations to them into utter abhorrence and detestation of them.

As, suppose a company of traitors should meet together to consult how to carry on a rebellion against the king, and while they were at it, the king himself should always happen to come in among them; how confounded would they be at his presence? how soon would they leave off consulting any more about it? Every sin is an act of treason and rebellion against the supreme Monarch of the world, who is always privy to every step that is made towards it, and is constantly present both at the designing and acting of it: And if men did but see him as really as he is there, they would not dare so much as to think any more of it.

HENCE therefore we may see one great reason wherefore virtue is so rare, and vice so common in the world; why there are so few pious, so many wicked persons in it, even because most men live as without God in the world, never thinking of him, at least not so as to believe him to be always with them. *The wicked, saith David, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts*, Psal. x. 4. And elsewhere, speaking to God, he saith, *O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them*, Psal. lxxxvi. 14. That is the reason why they are so wicked, so proud, and violent, because they never think of God, nor set him before them: If they did that they would soon become more holy, more humble and meek: The very thinking of him would of itself contribute very much towards it; much more when it is influenced and assisted by the Spirit of God, which usually moves upon our souls while we are thinking and acting our faith upon him, and so diverts our thoughts, and by consequence our affections, from every thing that is contrary to his holy nature, and inclines our hearts to keep his laws: And therefore all who constantly set God before them, can never be moved so as to fall quite from him, because they are still supported and assisted by him that is at their right hand; and though he may sometime see good to let go his hold of them, and suffer them to slip and stumble into sin, yet if they do not let go their hold of him too, but continue to act their faith on him, they will soon get up again, and walk more steadily than ever.

A REMARKABLE instance of which we have in St. Peter, to whom our Lord said, *Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren*; Luke xxii. 31, 32. From whence it appears, that altho a great temptation should befall him, which should shake him very much, and endanger his total ruin, yet that his faith should not fail, and by that he should recover himself, and grow stronger afterwards: And so it came to pass; for when he had deny'd his Master thrice, he turned his eyes towards him, and saw Christ turning himself, and looking upon him; upon which he immediately called to mind the words of our Lord, how he said, *Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice; and he went out and wept bitterly*, Luke xxii. 61, 62. and from that time forward could never be mov'd to deny his Master any more, but continued his faithful servant all his life long, and at last too laid it down for his sake. And as St. Peter, so soon as ever he saw Christ looking upon him, immediately called his sin to remembrance, and repented of it, so let any one also who is fallen into any grievous sin, but look up to God or Christ, and firmly believe that he sees him, and he'll soon call his sin to mind, as St. Peter did, and be as much troubled for it, and as really converted from it, as he was.

AND seeing this prevents our falling into, or lying long in sin, it must needs keep us likewise firm and stedfast in our duty to God: For the neglect of that being a sin, and a great one too, whatsoever conduceth towards the preserving us from sin, cannot but conduce also towards the performance of our duty; as setting of God always before us, doth in an eminent manner, insomuch that we can neither perform any duty well without it, nor ill with it. He that setteth upon any duty, without setting of God at the same time before him, goes so awkwardly about it, and is so dull and heavy, so cold and stupid, in the performance of it, that it is the mere outside and shell of a duty that hath nothing of life or vigour in it, nor indeed any thing of real duty; but it is a mere flat and insipid performance, neither acceptable to God, nor any way profitable to him that doth it: Whereas, he that sets God always before him, as he dare not omit any duty which God requires of him, so he dare not perform it in a careless, indifferent manner, nor any other way than as God requires it to be done; as knowing that he takes notice all along, not only of what he doth, but likewise how he doth it: which if you'd always remember and think of, while you are performing any duty unto God, you would be so far from running it over in a superficial manner, that you would think your whole souls too little to be employed in it.

WHILE you are at your private devotions, where none sees you but God, if you would set your selves solemnly, as in his presence, and duly consider, that he hears every word you speak to him, and observes every motion both of your soul and body before him; how grave, how serious, how devout would you be! how careful to say nothing to him, but what becomes you to speak, and him to hear! how impartial would you be in examining your selves! how heavenly in your meditations! how earnest in your petitions! how free from distractions! how cordial and sincere in the whole performance!

WHILE you are praying or praising God in publick, where he hath promised to be present with you in a more peculiar manner, did you really believe that he is so, and accordingly set him all the while before you, how humbly would you prostrate yourselves before him? with what reverence and godly fear would you serve and worship him? Your thoughts would be so composed, your minds so raised, and your whole souls so enlarged towards him, that you would think yourselves in heaven, joining with the glorified saints and angels, in admiring, adoring, praising and magnifying the Almighty Creator of the world; and say with *David* to him, *A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness*, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. While you hear God's holy word read or expounded to you, did you really believe, that he is there present with you, and speaks to you particularly, and acquaints you with his divine will and pleasure, what he would have you to believe and do, that you may continue in his love and favour; how attentive would you then be, and ready to catch at every expression? You would then receive it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh in them who thus believe, and none else; 1 Thes. ii. 13.

WHEN you are invited to our Lord's table, did you really believe Christ himself will meet you there, and apply all the merits of his death and passion to you, for the pardon of all your sins, how readily would you accept of so gracious an invitation? With what care and diligence would you prepare yourselves for it? And while you were there, did you really believe that you were then in the special presence of Christ himself, your all-sufficient, almighty, all-merciful, all-glorious Saviour; with what shamefacedness and modesty, with what reverence and humility would you carry yourselves before him? How would you wonder to see the Son of God himself going about by his minister, and offering the bread and water of life to all that hunger and thirst after it? And, how would you hunger, and thirst, and long, till it came to your turns to receive it? And, how sweet would it be to your souls? What pleasure and delight would you take in eating and drinking of it? The sacrament would then seem quite another thing to you than what it used to do, and you would esteem it the greatest happiness of your lives, that you have so many opportunities of being made partakers of it.

THUS you see how acting our faith in God and Christ, as really present with us all the while that we are using of them, quickens and invigorates the means of grace and salvation, and makes them effectual to the great ends for which they are appointed; so that we actually obtain the grace and salvation which is administered

nistred by them. Indeed, the setting of God alway before us is itself one of the best means we can ever use, both to procure and preserve in us a true sense of his divine perfections, and by consequence all manner of grace and virtue which naturally flows from it.

FOR if we could be alway looking upon God, and beholding his infinite wisdom, and greatness, and love, and goodness to us, our affections would soon be taken off from all things else, and placed only upon him; for nothing would seem wise, or great, or lovely, or good, or any thing, but only He: By which means our whole souls would be enflamed with love to him, above all things in the world; which can never be abated, much less extinguish'd, so long as we keep our eye fix'd upon him; for our eye will still affect our heart, and so our love to God will be rather always growing stronger and stronger, untill at length it comes to its highest perfection; which cannot be till we get to heaven, where, as we shall see God perfectly, we shall love him perfectly.

BUT even while we are upon earth, He whom our souls love is alway present with us, and manifesting his love to us: And if we really believe that he is so, how can we forbear to rejoice in him, and to please ourselves in pleasing him? We cannot but delight in the company of those we love, tho they be but our fellow-creatures: What delight then must they needs have who love God above all things, in having him always in their company? Wheresoever they are, the best friend they have in the world is always present with them; and tho they cannot see him with their bodily eyes, yet believing him to be so, as the apostle speaks, they *rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8.

AND as this is the way whereby to live and rejoice in the Lord alway, so this is the way also whereby to have the fear of God always before our eyes, even by setting him always before them.

So long as men do not think of God, nor believe him to be near them, it is no wonder if they do not fear him, nor regard whether he be pleased or displeased with them: But for a man to be fully persuaded, that the Almighty Creator and Governour of all things is present with him, and yet to stand in no awe of him, is impossible; as he himself intimates by his prophet, saying, *Fear ye not me, saith the Lord? will ye not tremble at my presence?* Jer. v. 22. Can a guilty prisoner see his judge, and not fear him? Can a known rebel behold his prince frowning upon him, and not fear him? How much less can sinful mortals look upon the King and Judge of the whole world, as present with them, and not tremble before him? It cannot be: The thoughts of our being always under his eye, would be enough certainly to strike us dead, unless we had some grounds to hope for favour and mercy at his hands; as, blessed be his great name, we have.

FOR we have his own word for it, That *his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation*, Luke i. 50. and that *he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy*, Psal. cxlvii. 11. And therefore, as the wise man observes, *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence*, Prov. xiv. 26. For the more we fear him, the more cause we have to trust on him, and to hope for mercy, and all good things we can desire from him: And therefore they who alway set God before them, as they cannot but alway fear him, so they cannot but also put their trust and confidence in him, as always ready to protect and defend them; so that they shall never be moved from that state and condition of life, which he in his infinite wisdom and goodness sees best for them.

THIS David found by experience, and therefore was confident of it; *Because he, saith he, is on my right hand, I shall not be moved*. And this hath been the constant experience of all good men in all ages, even of all who alway set God before them, and so have him alway on their side: And if God be for them who can be against them? If he be with them, what evil can come near them? What need they fear, who have Omnipotence itself alway ready to preserve them, wheresoever they are? This is the argument which he himself makes use of to encourage his people, that they may fear nothing but him: *Fear thou not, saith he, for I am with thee: Be not dismay'd, for I am thy God; for I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness*, Isa. xli. 10. *When thou passest thro the waters, I will be with thee, and thro the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest thro the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*, chap. xliii. 2. He may suffer them to pass thro fire and water, but he will not suffer them to be hurt by either of them: He may
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bring them into trouble, but he'll preserve them from the evil of it, and make it really good for them; and all, because he is still with them in it. Thus he was with *Noah* in the ark, with *Joseph* in prison, with *Israel* in the midst of the sea, with *Job* upon the dunghill, with *David* upon the mountains, with the three children in the fiery furnace, with *Daniel* in the lions den, with *Jeremiah* in the dungeon, with *Jonah* in the whale's belly, and with the apostles in the common prison: and being alway with them, how wonderfully did he preserve them, altering often the very course of nature, rather than any thing should hurt them, who set him alway before them?

AND if we set him before us as they did, he will be with us as he was with them; and then how securely may we walk thro all the changes and chances of this mortal life, when we really believe that Almighty God, and Jesus Christ, our most gracious and most merciful Father, is always present with us, by his wisdom to direct us, by his mercy to pardon us, by his grace to assist us, by his Spirit to conduct us, and by his power to defend us from all evil, or to turn it into good. What need we trouble our heads about what may, or what may not happen upon earth, when we know that our heavenly Father always stands by us, and orders every thing that occurs, to our advantage? What need we fear the devil, or all the fiends in hell, so long as the Son of God, *who loved us, and gave himself for us*, is always with us, ready upon all occasions to fight for us, and to enable us to fight for him against his and our ghostly enemies? What need we be discouraged at the reliques of sin within us, seeing the Holy Spirit of God is always with us, and his grace is always sufficient for us? What need we fear either shame, or pain, or trouble, or want, or weakness, or sickness, or death, or any evil whatsoever, who have glory, and ease, and joy, and all-sufficiency, and strength, and health, and life, and goodness, even God himself, continually with us? Let us but alway set him before us, and we may alway say with *David*, *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?* Psal. xxvii. 1. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble: Therefore will not we fear, tho the earth be removed, and tho the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; tho the waters roar and are troubled, tho the mountains shake with the swelling thereof: The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.* Psal. xli. 1, 2, 3, 7. *In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.* Psal. xli. 11. *I have set the Lord alway before me, because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*

WHO then would not set the Lord alway before him? And who may not do it if he will, seeing no more is requir'd to it, but constantly to believe what we cannot deny, even that he is alway with us? For which purpose therefore let us not suffer ourselves to be led any longer by our senses, but let us live by faith, acting it continually upon God, as present with us, looking over us, and into us, observing all the passages of our life. Whatsoever employment we are about, let us still remember that God sees both what it is, and how we do it. Whatsoever company we are in, let us still remember that God is in it, and takes notice of every thing we think, or speak, or do together. Whithersoever we go, let us still remember that God goes along with us; when we sit down, that he stands by us; and when we rise up, that he helps us. Whensoever any trouble falls upon us, let us remember, that God is present to support us under it, to make us better by it, and when he sees good, to deliver us from it. Whatsoever danger we are in, let us still remember, that no danger can be so near us as God is, who is always at hand to defend us from it, and to bless it to us. In short, whatsoever our condition be in this life, let us still remember and believe, that the All-wise God, and our most merciful Father, knows it to be good for us, and is always with us to make it so.

COULD we thus accustom ourselves to call God to mind upon all occasions, and actually believe that he is then present with us, as he really is, we should soon learn the divine art of setting him alway before us; and then how circumspectly should we walk? how comfortably should we live? how stedfast and unmoveable should we be in the midst of all the storms and tempests we meet with here below? We should indeed live next door to heaven, and want nothing to complete our happiness, but to do that which we endeavour perfectly: For to have God alway perfectly in our eye, so as clearly to behold his glory and goodness, is the happiness of heaven; where our faith being turned into vision, we shall see

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God face to face, and so be perfectly happy in him. And so far as we set God alway before us upon earth, so much we partake of the joys of heaven, and are so far happy according to our weak capacity in this world, and in the ready way to be fully, perfectly, eternally happy in the next, through his merits and mediation for us, who is always with us, even Jesus Christ our ever blessed Lord and Saviour:

To whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end.

S E R M O N C V I.

Perpetual rejoicing the Duty of Christians.

PHIL. iv. 4.

Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice.

HE that aims at true piety and virtue, that he may be meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, must begin with his heart, and take special care that all be right there: For, as *Solomon* observeth, *Out of the heart are the issues of life*, Prov. iv. 23. And a greater than *Solomon*, *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, Mat. xii.

34. All our words and actions have their rise in the heart, and from thence issue forth into the life; and therefore God hath given such laws to our hearts, that if they were but duly observed, all his other commandments would be pleasant and easy: for they all tend to the directing the several motions of our hearts towards himself, that they may all meet and center in him, as they were at first designed to do. Thus he commands, that our thoughts be always running upon him, and our desires carried after him; that we live with a constant fear and reverence of his glory and power, and with a sure trust and confidence in his goodness and truth; that we love him with all our hearts and souls, so as to have no love for any thing else, but in obedience and subordination to him: and if we do that, it follows in course, that we must also rejoice in him; for that we cannot chuse but do it in what we love. And as we are to love him always, so we are always to rejoice in him: which, notwithstanding, that we may be the more sure to do, he hath here by his apostle given us a particular command about it, saying, *Rejoice in the Lord alway*. And the better to enforce it upon us he repeats it again; *And again I say, rejoice*.

WHICH being a duty that the best of men are sometimes apt to forget, or at least to be deficient in, I shall endeavour to explain it more particularly to you, that ye may know how you may and ought to *rejoice in the Lord alway*. For which purpose, taking the words as an entire preposition as they are of themselves, without troubling you about their coherence with what goes before, or follows them, we may briefly consider,

I. WHAT it is properly to *rejoice in the Lord*.

II. WHO are here commanded to do it.

III. How they should *rejoice in the Lord*.

IV. THAT this is to be done *alway*.

V. How we may. And,

VI. WHY we ought to do it.

UNTO which few heads, all, I think, may be referred, that is necessary to be known concerning these words, and the great duty contained in them.

I. WHAT it is properly to rejoice, we may all understand by our own experience, better than by any definition or description that can be given of it: For when we apprehend any thing to be good and agreeable to us, we feel in ourselves a secret kind of complacency and delight in the enjoyment of it, which none can perceive but our selves; according to that of the wise man, *The heart knoweth his own bitterness: and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy*, Prov. xiv. 10.

BUT here we must observe, That the joy here spoken of, is no way like the pleasure that ariseth from our senses or fancy being duly touched by their proper objects: For such sensual pleasures do not affect us as men, but only as animals, and so are common to us with the beasts that perish. But true joy is seated only in the soul, or rational part of man, as such; and is a serious, grave, sedate, severe thing, that supports and cheers the heart, and overspreads it with an inward peace, quiet, and satisfaction, arising from something that is of the nature of the soul itself, spiritual and immaterial, and so good and proper for it that the whole soul is composed, refreshed and delighted with the sight and fruition of it.

BUT this nothing in the world can do, but God, the chiefest good, who hath made our souls of such a temper, and of so large capacities, that nothing can fill and satiate them but himself; and therefore, intending himself to be the only object of their joy and happiness, hath made nothing capable of contributing towards it, any farther than by discovering his divine perfections to us, that we may be able to see so much of him, as may fill our hearts with joy and comfort in him: But still it is only in him that we can truly rejoice, as we are here commanded to do.

II. THIS will give us some light into the next question to be consider'd, even who are here commanded to *rejoice in the Lord*: For it is plain, that neither the unclean spirits nor wicked or sinful men, can do it if they would: For altho they have the same powers and faculties in their souls as other men have, yet by conversing with nothing but the things of this world, they are so immers'd in matter, that they are not capable of any sort of spiritual joys; and being disordered and out of tune, they are so disagreeable and contrary to the holy nature of God, that they cannot possibly rejoice in him, nor so much as think of him without horror and confusion. *The wicked, as the prophet observes, are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast out mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*, Isa. lvii. 20, 21. nor can be, so long as they are wicked. They may seem to live at ease, and may enjoy the pleasures, as they are called, of this life; they may, like the rich man in the gospel, *be clothed with purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day*; they may laugh and be merry, and look as if they were the happiest people upon earth; yet all this while they have no true peace and joy in their hearts; for they can never rejoice in the Lord, he is not in all their thoughts; or if he happen to come in, as he sometimes may, against their wills, they are so far from rejoicing, that they are terrified and troubled at it: for being conscious to themselves that they have offended him, and still continue to do so, they can see nothing in him but wrath and vengeance; and therefore, instead of rejoicing, they should rather be afflicted, and mourn, and weep for their sins, so as to repent of them, and turn with all their hearts unto the Lord, that they may be capable of rejoicing in him, which till then they are not.

I COULD not forbear to take notice of this, tho at the same time it puts me into a great fear, that all I shall say upon this subject, will be lost as to a great part of the congregation, if not to the greatest, even to all such who are still in their sins,

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who have not their eyes yet opened, so as to turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: For such will not be able to understand what I say, nor know what I mean by rejoicing in the Lord: They could never do it themselves, and therefore cannot imagine how others should. So that all such, I fear, will go out of the church just as they came in, without being any ways affected with what they hear.

BUT howsoever in the midst of my fears, I have some hope, that whilst I am speaking to your ears, Almighty God may open some of your hearts, to see the things which belong to your everlasting peace, and how much it concerns you in interest as well as duty, to leave off your sins, and to strive all ye can to get into the number of those happy souls, who always may, and are always bound to rejoice in the Lord.

BUT whatsoever may be the issue as to such, there are some, I hope, here present, who are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. These will be glad to hear of their duty, that they may better know how to do it; especially, such a duty as this, which is likewise their happiness and privilege. These also will soon apprehend what is said about rejoicing in the Lord, it being a thing which they frequently do. And having often felt the sweetness of it, they will be the more easily persuaded to do it always, as they are here commanded.

FOR that this command is given to the saints, and to them only, is plain, in that the apostle writes only to them. He directs this epistle to *all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, Chap. i. 1.* And looking upon them as his brethren in Christ, he saith to them, *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord, Chap. iii. 1.* And again, in the beginning of this chapter, he calls them *his brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, his joy and crown*: which none could be, but the saints beforementioned: And to them he here saith, *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.* And so the scripture all along calls upon the saints or righteous, and upon none else, to rejoice in the Lord. *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, said David; for praise is comely for the upright, Psal. xxxiii. 1. and xcvi. 12.* for the upright; not for the wicked and unrighteous: Grief and sorrow becomes them better than joy and praise. And elsewhere he saith to God, *Let all those that put their trust in thee, rejoice: Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: Let them also that love thy name, be joyful in thee, Psal. v. 11.* They who love him, as be sure all his saints and servants do, they must needs be joyful in him, for that very reason, because they love him, and because they are here commanded to *rejoice in the Lord always.*

REJOICE in the Lord, in Jehovah, the Almighty and Everlasting God; the first cause of all things; the chiefest, the only good, and so the only object of all true joy. Rejoice in his wisdom, that is infinite; in his power, that is boundless; in his word, that is infallible; in his judgments, that are unfearcheable; in his name, that is great, wonderful and holy; in his goodness, that is over all his works.

REJOICE in the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth; who commanded all things out of nothing, by the word of his power; who hung the earth upon nothing; gave bounds to the sea; life and breath to animals; being to all things that be: who spread out the heavens like a curtain, and therein set the sun and moon, and an innumerable company of stars, giving them light, and heat, and laws, which cannot be broken: who made man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, whereby he became a living soul, capable of reflecting upon, and rejoicing in him that made him. *Let Israel therefore rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King, Psal. cxlix. 2.* For thou Lord, hast made me glad thro thy works: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. O Lord, how great are thy works! Thy thoughts are very deep, Psal. xcii. 4, 5.

REJOICE in the Lord, the Almighty Preserver of the whole world: who upholdeth all things he made, with the power of the same word; by which he made them: who causeth the grass to grow for the cattel, and herb for the service of men: who giveth food to all flesh, and blesteth it to the maintenance and support of life. *The Lord also is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Psal. xli. 1.* He is my strength and shield; my heart trusted on him, and I am helped: Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him, Psal. xxviii. 7. Because thou, O Lord, hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. Psal. lxxiii. 7.

REJOICE

REJOICE in the Lord, the Lord of the whole earth; the Lord of all the world, who rules and reigns over all things that are, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and in earth, in the sea and all deep places; ordering and disposing of all and every thing that is, with such infinite wisdom and goodness, that nothing can happen, but what shall tend some way or other to the glory of his great name, and to the benefit of all those who serve and honour him. How then can such forbear to be glad and rejoice in him! *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.* Psal. xcvi. 1. *O let the nations rejoice and be glad, for thou, Lord, shalt judge the folk righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.* Psal. lxxvii. 4.

ABOVE all, rejoice in the Lord our Saviour; the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe, 1 Tim. iv. 10. the strength, the God of our salvation; our salvation itself. *For the Lord is my strength, and song, and is become my salvation.* Psal. cxviii. 14. The very naming of which, is enough to fill our hearts with joy and gladness, as much, and more than they are able to hold: That the Almighty Creator, Preserver and Governor of the whole world in general, should in a particular and wonderful manner, become the Saviour, yea, the salvation of mankind: That he, for that purpose, should be conceived of his own Spirit, and born of a woman, so as to be both perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting: That having thus taken our nature upon him, he in that should perform exact obedience to his own laws, and then offer it up as a sacrifice for our transgressions of them: That as he was deliver'd for our offences, he was rais'd again for our justification: That he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him: That being raised from the dead, he went up into heaven, and was there set at the right hand of God the Father, the next in power and honour to him: That the man Christ Jesus is there exalted above all the creatures in the world, angels, principalities and powers being made subject to him: That he is now there appearing in the presence of God for us, the Mediator between God and us, our Advocate with the Father, ever living to make intercession for us: that we have such a glorious such an Almighty Saviour in heaven, continually taking care of all things necessary to bring us thither: That he is therefore making such effectual intercession for us, by virtue of the death he suffer'd for our sins, that they are all pardoned as soon as repented of: That he is there exalted by the right hand of God, to be a Prince as well as Saviour, to give repentance also, as well as forgiveness of sins: That nothing can happen in the world, by the general providence of God, but he is there ready to bless it to us, and make it turn to our advantage: That by him we have access to God the Father, and can truly call him *our God* and *our Father* too: That whatsoever we ask in his name, we are sure to have it, so far as it is good for us: That he from thence supplies us with all things necessary both for life and godliness, that we may never want any thing that can contribute to our sanctification and salvation by him: That he from thence sends down his holy Spirit upon us, and so by it is alway present with us, to direct us what to do, and to assist us in the doing of it: That his grace is always sufficient for us, and his strength made perfect in our weakness, so that we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us: That he also, as the Sun of righteousness in heaven, reflects such a lustre upon what we do, that altho we be imperfect in ourselves, yet we are accepted of as righteous thro him: In short, that he is now in heaven, preparing a place for us, that we may live with him there, and rejoice in him for ever!

CAN we hear all this, and our hearts not burn within us! How well might the angel say to the shepherds at the birth of Christ, *Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy that shall be to all people!* For what greater joy can there be than this, that we have such a Saviour, who is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him? How well then may we say with the blessed Virgin, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour?* And with the prophet, *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath cover'd me with the robe of righteousness?* Isa. lxi. 10. And with the Psalmist, *O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and shew ourselves joyful in him with Psalms!* Psal. xcv. 1, 2. And with the apostle in my text, *Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say rejoice?*

REJOICE in the Lord alway; or as it is elsewhere expressed, *Rejoice evermore,* 1 Thes. v. 16. This is not a duty to be perform'd only now and then, but at all times,

upon all occasions, in all conditions; whatsoever happens, we must still take care to keep our hearts in such a temper that we may rejoice in the Lord, whether we have, or have not any thing else to rejoice in. It is the wise man's advice, *In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider*, Ecclef. vii. 14. When we prosper in the world, and all things fall out according to our desire, it is an easy matter to be joyful, and we commonly are so: But it is not so easy then to rejoice in the Lord, but rather the more difficult. For when he gives us all things richly to enjoy, we are apt to set our hearts upon them, and to take so much pleasure in them, that we forget him that gave them. So that it is a very difficult thing to get, and keep our hearts in such a frame, that in the midst of all our temporal enjoyments, we can rejoice in the Lord more than in them, and in them only as they come from him, and are tokens of his love and favour to us. Which therefore we should strive all we can to do, that we may not take up with the seeming pleasures of the world, instead of that real and substantial joy that is to be had in him who gave them, and who gave them on purpose that we might rejoice the more in him.

AND if they who are in adversity would rightly consider, they will find, that they have then also cause to rejoice in the Lord, the same as when they are in the greatest prosperity; forasmuch as that also is a sign of that fatherly care and love that he hath for all his sons and servants: *For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*, Heb. xii. 6. And who can but rejoice in every token of God's love, and in him who is pleased to shew it; especially, when any trouble befalls them for his sake, and he enables them to bear it to his honour and glory? This is so great a favour, that the disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, Acts v. 41. And St. Paul could truly say, *I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake*, 2 Cor. xii. 10. To some people these may seem strange things for a man to take pleasure in, but they who are the faithful servants of Jesus Christ, find so much pleasure in doing and suffering any thing they can for him, that they have little or no sense of the suffering, but that is swallow'd up with the joy they have in him, for honouring them so far, as to lay it upon them for his own sake.

BUT after all, it is much the same thing as to our rejoicing in the Lord, the chiefest good, whether we have or have not the good things, as they are called, here below: For if we have them, they can afford us no manner of comfort without him: And if we have them not, we can rejoice in him as much as if we had, or rather more. For being all naturally desirous of joy and comfort, and having nothing else from whence we can have it, but only God, our own inclinations will put us upon applying ourselves to him for it, which otherwise, perhaps, we should not think of: which may be one great reason wherefore God is often pleased to deny the comforts of this life to his best and dearest children, even lest they should take up with them instead of him, with the streams instead of the fountain; but that they may alway rejoice in him, and in him alone; which they endeavour therefore all they can to do, in the midst of all the changes and chances of this mortal life; whether they have more or less; whether he gives or takes from them; whether they live in plenty or poverty, in honour or disgrace; whether he grants or disappointeth them of their expectations and desires, it is all one to them: they can still sing with the prophet, *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation*, Hab. iii. 17, 18.

O divine temper of mind! Thrice happy they who can attain unto it! But how is it possible that we should thus rejoice in the Lord? We, frail and sinful creatures! We, who are tossed to and fro with so many storms and tempests! We, who never continue in one stay! We, who are so often ruffled and discomposed by one cross accident or other, tho we may perhaps sometimes rejoice in the Lord; how is it possible that we should do it alway? To that I answer, That whatsoever God hath commanded us to do, it is possible for us to do it, otherwise he would not have commanded it. But as we can keep none of his commandments without great care and diligence; so neither can we keep this, except we set ourselves in good earnest about it, and use all such means as conduce any way towards it.

AMONG which the first is, That *we keep our consciences alway void of offence both towards God and towards man.* For he, whose conscience accuseth him of any habitual sin and offence against God, can look upon God no otherwise than as angry and displeased with him, and therefore, instead of rejoicing in him, will rather be troubled at the thoughts of him; like the devils, who *believe and tremble.* But as I observ'd before, this command is given only to such whose hearts are right with God, and can therefore say with his apostle, *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world,* 2 Cor. i. 12.

BUT such also, in order to their rejoicing always in the Lord, must keep a strict watch over themselves, and live as much as it is possible above the temper of their own bodies. For while we are in the body, our souls are subject to the humours that are predominant in it; some of which are very apt to impede and hinder us in the exercise of so spiritual a duty as this is. The sanguine are too airy for such solid joys, and the melancholy too dull and heavy for such high flights as are necessary to our reaching of them. I do not deny, but that a little melancholy may be sometimes as good as balast to a ship, to keep it steady; but too much is apt to sink the soul into so much grief and sorrow, that it is very difficult for it to raise up itself so high as to rejoice at all, much less in God himself. And therefore they who are subject to this distemper, must take special heed that they do not give way to it, nor indulge themselves, as they commonly do, in it, but must do all they can to suppress it, or at least to keep it so much under, that it may not overpower the soul and divert it from thinking upon God, and rejoicing in him. Which they may, and ought to do, in the midst of all these dismal and troublesome thoughts, which this black humour is apt to suggest into them, so as to be able to say with *David, In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts, O Lord, delight my soul,* Psal. xciv. 19. and with the apostle, *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,* 2. Cor. vi. 10. Tho as men, they are full of grief and sorrow; yet as Christians, at the same time, they rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation.

FOR Christians, as such, are alway the same, not carry'd about with every wind that blows without them, nor with every humour that moves within them; but alway sedate and calm, and so in a right disposition to enjoy God, and rejoice in him, in whatsoever state or condition they are. This is that which the apostle here requires in this very case: For having said, *rejoice in the Lord alway,* he adds, in the very next verse, *Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand.* Το ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν, let your equanimity, or evenness of temper in all conditions, be so constant and apparent, that all men may see it, and the Lord too, who is at hand to assist you in it, and ere long will reward you for it. But for that purpose, he adds also, *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God,* ver 6. Whereby is intimated, That in order to our rejoicing in the Lord, as is before commanded, we must not suffer our hearts to be distracted with the cares of this life, but let them hang loose and indifferent to all things here below, and fixed only upon God. We must live above this world, and have our conversation in heaven, where only these true joys are to be found; otherwise we can never have them.

FOR this purpose therefore, if riches increase, set not your hearts upon them: If honours, suffer not yourselves to be puffed up with the conceit of them: If worldly pleasures, look not upon them as they come, but as they go, and leave a sting behind them: If troubles or afflictions befall you, consider whence they come, and whither they tend; that they come from your heavenly Father, are design'd for your good, and will effect it too, if you do but make a right use of them; that these *light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,* 2 Cor. iv. 17. that *all things work together for good to those who love God,* Rom. viii. 28. So that nothing can happen, but ye have cause to rejoice in the Lord, and thank him for it.

REMEMBER also the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said to his disciples, *Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy,* John xvi. 20. For this is an exceeding great comfort in the midst of all our sorrow, That our sorrow will not only have an end, but it will end in joy, and in joy too that will never have an end; and all through the goodness and mercy of God, in whom therefore we have alway infinite cause to rejoice, more than we can ever have to be sorrowful for any thing in the world.

THE greatest and truest cause of sorrow, is sin; that we have broken the laws, dishonoured the name, and so have incurred the displeasure of Almighty God: For this we can never be sorrowful enough; yet nevertheless in the midst of this godly sorrow also, we have infinite cause to rejoice in the Lord our God and Saviour, in that he himself hath reconciled us to himself by his own blood: that he in our nature suffer'd the punishment which was due unto our sins, and is now a propitiation for them at the right hand of the Father: that in him we have redemption thro his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, of all our sins: They were all laid upon him, and therefore none of them shall be charged upon us: For, *who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*, Rom. viii. 33, 34. *Whom therefore having not seen, we love; in whom, tho now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 1.

THIS is joy unspeakable indeed, and so full of glory that the world knows nothing of it: None but they who live with a constant and firm belief in God our Saviour, without which it is impossible to *rejoice in the Lord* at all, much more, to do it *alway*. And therefore, as ever we desire to do what we have now heard, we must alway keep our faith fixed upon Christ our Mediator and Advocate with the Father; and in his name pray for the Holy Spirit, to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by his inspiration, that we may have a right judgment in all things, and evermore rejoice in his holy comfort, who is therefore called *The Comforter*, because we can have no true comfort but by him: But by him we may have the greatest that any creature is capable of, comfort in God himself, the fountain of all true joy and comfort; so as to rejoice always in him, and that too, not only in a faint and weak manner, according to our narrow capacities, but by the sweet influences, and most powerful assistance of the Holy Spirit, which proceedeth from himself.

THIS therefore is that which I must advise you all to do; all such, I mean, as live in the true faith and fear of God, and make it your chief care and study to please, and serve and honour him. I speak not to them who are still in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity, and so are altogether unacquainted with those celestial joys, which are not only above them, but contrary to their corrupt and sinful inclinations. But as for such among you, who strive all ye can to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, take ye special care to walk in this, as well as in any other of them; this being not only one of these commandments, but one of those without which the other can never be kept aright: For ye must not only do the will of God, but delight to do it; which ye can never do, without rejoicing in him, whose will it is, and who assists you all the while ye are doing it.

YOU profess to serve God, take heed that ye do not dishonour him, by living a melancholy and disconsolate sort of a life, as if ye served a hard task-master, that gives you work to do, without furnishing you with necessaries for it. For this would be a great reflection upon him and his service, and discourage others from entering into it. But as ye serve the greatest and best Master in the world, do it with all the cheerfulness and alacrity that ye can; rejoicing continually in his holy name, and in his infinite mercy and kindness to you, in that he is pleased to admit you into the number of his own servants. This will make his service both easy and pleasant to you: And tho it be far short of what ye owe him, yet he will be well pleased with it for Christ Jesus sake, and in him also plentifully reward you for it. He will give you all ye can desire, to make ye happy. *Delight thy self in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart*, Psal. xxxvii. 4.

BLESSED therefore is the people, O Lord, that can rejoice in thee, they shall walk in the light of thy countenance: *Their delight shall be daily in thy name, and in thy righteousness shall they make their boast*, Psal. lxxxix. 16, 17. They live in heaven while they are upon earth, and whilst other people feed upon husks, like brutes, they enjoy the same kind of pleasures, tho not in so great a measure, here below, which the glorified saints and angels do above, who are always rejoicing in the Lord, and singing forth the praises of his holy name.

AND, as we desire to do it with them hereafter, we must begin it here; and spend the rest of our time so, that we may be duly qualified fully to partake of those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore; even that we may perfectly, continually and eternally rejoice in our most mighty Creator, most merciful Redeemer, and most gracious Comforter, One God, blessed for ever.

S E R M O N CVII.

Universal Thanksgiving the Duty of Christians.

1 THES. V. 18.

In every thing give Thanks: For this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

ALTHO religion, or the constant devotion of our selves to the service of God, be commonly thought to be a very disconsolate and melancholy course of life, by those who never made tryal of it; yet they who have, find by their own experience, that it is the most pleasant and comfortable way of living they can ever take to: forasmuch as it reduceth all the faculties of their souls, and members of their bodies into their proper frame and temper, and exerciseth them continually in the great work which they were at first designed and fitted for. By which means they are not only quiet and at ease, always living as it were in their proper element, but likewise feel a sweet kind of joy and pleasure in their minds, arising from the apprehension, that he that made them is well pleased with them for doing the work he made them for, and so answering his end in making of them.

AND hence it is, that all who are truly pious, and sincerely endeavour to serve and obey God, take more delight in doing that than any thing, or all things else. As wee see in *David*, who often professeth, that the commands of God were dearer to him than *gold and silver*, and *sweeter than honey or the honey-comb*. Neither must we ascribe this to conceit or fancy, but to the will of God, who hath so adapted our nature to his commands, or his commands to our nature, that every act of sincere obedience to his commands is as pleasing and grateful to the pure and pious soul that duly performs it, as it is to God himself: And whosoever doth not thus *delight in the law of God*, as *St. Paul* did, *after the inner man*, it is, because his soul is corrupted and out of tune; and therefore cannot relish such pure and spiritual delights which naturally flow from a due observation of God's commands; and can never be separated from it without sin: For the same God, who hath commanded us to do his will, hath commanded us also to delight in the doing of it; and so hath made it as much our duty to live chearfully and comfortably, as it is *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*.

THIS I confess, at first sight may seem strange doctrine to many of you; mens minds being generally prepossess'd with such prejudices against religion, as to fancy they cannot set about it in good earnest, but they must bid adieu to all the pleasures of human life: whereas in truth, there is no true pleasure to be had without it; neither is there any thing in it, but what may and ought to be pleasant to them: which were you all convinced of, you would need no other arguments to persuade you to the constant exercise of true piety and virtue, as the only means whereby to obtain what you all desire, even to live pleasantly and happily, both in this world and the next.

THIS therefore is that which I shall now endeavour to demonstrate to you; and for that purpose desire you to observe, that the apostle here among other things, lays down *three* general rules for all Christians to observe, *Rejoice evermore. Pray*

without

without ceasing. In every thing give thanks. All which being dictated by the command and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, are as necessary to be observed, as any law or precept whatsoever in the whole bible; and that too not only now and then, but *evermore, without ceasing, in every thing*: so that all and every one of these duties ought to run thro the whole course of our lives.

FIRST, we must *rejoice evermore*, continually, without intermission. Whatsoever happens in the world, we must still rejoice: In what? In him that governs it: As the same apostle elsewhere explains himself, saying, *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice*, Phil. iv. 4. where, as he presseth this duty upon us twice with the same breath, so he directs us likewise to the proper object of it, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the All-wise, All good, Almighty, All-sufficient, and Eternal God, who being always the only object of our joy, we ought always to rejoice in him only, both when we have, and when we have not any thing else to rejoice in.

AND as we must thus *rejoice evermore*, so we must *pray without ceasing*. Not that we are bound to be always upon our knees, for we have many other duties to perform, as well as prayer; and tho we may, and ought to rejoice, we cannot pray in them all: And therefore the apostle here purposely alters the phrase from *πάντοτε*, *evermore*, or *always*, to *ἀδιαλείπτως*, *without ceasing*, not without intermitting, but without omitting or neglecting the duty, whensoever it is required of us, or we have an opportunity to perform it: we must never leave off our daily prayers as long as we live; but whatsoever happens, we must be sure to implore the mercy and grace of God every day; or, as the apostle elsewhere words it, *we must be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known our requests to God*, Phil. iv. 6. where we may observe, that the apostle orders thanksgiving to be always joined with our prayers; and so he doth in my text. For as we are to *rejoice in the Lord always*, so in order thereunto, we must *pray unto him without ceasing*, that being the means whereby to keep our minds always fixed upon him, and so in a right frame and disposition to rejoice always in him: But for that purpose, as we pray unto him for what we want, we must likewise give him thanks for what we have: And therefore he adds, *In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

WHERE we may first observe in general, That all these duties have one and the same object, tho not expressed, yet supposed as certainly known to all Christians, even the Most High God. It is in him we must *rejoice evermore*: It is to him we must *pray without ceasing*: It is to him we must *give thanks for every thing*. And as they have all the same object, so they have the same obligation too. We are as much obliged to *rejoice evermore*, as we are to *pray without ceasing*: We are as much obliged to *pray without ceasing*, as we are to *give thanks in every thing*; and as much obliged to give thanks in every thing as we are either to *rejoice*, or to *pray without ceasing*. So that whosoever doth not perform all these duties, performs none of them as he ought: For he that performs any one aright, must do it in obedience to God's command; but the same God that hath commanded one, hath commanded the other too: and therefore he that performs any one of them in obedience to God's command, cannot but perform the rest also upon the same account.

HENCE therefore we may see how necessary it is to *rejoice always*, as necessary as it is to *pray*, or *in every thing to give thanks*; which we can never do, except we rejoice in every thing: For no man can be truly thankful for what he is not really glad of. And therefore seeing we are here commanded in every thing to give thanks, it necessarily follows, that whatsoever happens in the world, we must still be glad and rejoice in him that orders it; and by consequence we have no time allowed us for melancholy and discontent: but as we desire always to live up to the rules of the gospel as becometh Christians, we must always keep up our minds in a chearful frame and temper, that we may be always disposed and prepared to *give thanks in every thing*, and for all things, *Ephes. v. 23.*

WHICH that you may all at least know how to do, we shall briefly consider what it is properly to *give thanks*; how that ought to be done *in every thing*; and then the reason here alledged for it, Because *this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

THE first thing to be considered, is, What we are here to understand by *giving of thanks*, or wherein that duty properly consists. For which purpose we may observe, that the first thing necessary to our giving thanks, is to acknowledge

God in every thing: That nothing falls out, but by his care and providence, and according to his will and pleasure: That it is *in him we live, and move, and have our being*: That we have nothing but what we receive from him, who is the author and giver of every good and perfect gift: That as all things are made, so all things are governed and managed by him: That nothing can be, or act, or move, without him: That not so much as *a sparrow can fall to the ground without him*: And, that *the very hairs of our heads are all numbered by him*; as our Lord hath taught us, *Mat. x. 29, 30.* He that lives not in a constant sense, and firm belief of this, can never heartily give thanks to God for any thing that is.

BUT in order to our giving him due thanks for every thing, it is not enough to acknowledge his care and providence over the world in general, but we must do it particularly in every thing that is, or happens in the world; so as still to behold and admire his divine perfections shining forth in it; and especially his wisdom, power and goodness: His wisdom, in the contriving; his power, in the effecting; and his goodness, in his ordering of it for the best.

FIRST, We must acknowledge his wisdom in contriving and designing of every particular thing, so as to look upon it as the issue and product of the same infinite wisdom, that projected the system of the world, and the rare harmony which appears in the whole creation. For his wisdom is certainly the same in every thing that it is in all things; and therefore ought to be so acknowledged, otherwise we can never be truly thankful for any thing, as not knowing but that it might have been better contrived than it is; whereas, if I be fully persuaded in my mind, that every thing that happens, proceeds from the same wisdom that made all things, and therefore must needs be the best that could happen at that time; so that if it had been any otherwise than just as it is, it would have been worse both for the creation in general, and for my self in particular; if I be fully persuaded, I say, of this, I must needs give God the praise, and thanks that is due unto him for every thing that is, or rather my very acknowledging of it, is my thanking him for it, because hereby I agnize and celebrate the glory of his wisdom appearing in it.

BUT then, we must not only acknowledge his wisdom, but his power too; for that also manifesteth itself in every thing, as much as it doth in all things, and in the least as well as in the greatest. As nothing is impossible with God, so neither is one thing more possible than another, but every thing is equally an argument or demonstration of his omnipotence, and ought to be so acknowledged; and whosoever doth that, may be truly said *in every thing to give thanks*: because, hereby he professeth, that whatsoever falls out it is brought about by God; that whosoever may be the instrument, he is the principal agent in it; that whatsoever secondary causes may concur towards the effecting of it, he is still the first; and therefore, that all the glory of it is due to him alone.

BUT when we acknowledge his wisdom and power, we must not forget his goodness, which equally extendeth itself also to all and every thing that is. As in the beginning, when God had finished the creation, it is said, *That he beheld every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good*, Gen. i. 31. so it hath been ever since, so it is now, and so it always will be: whatsoever God doth, is very good, as good as it can be made; good in itself, and good for all his creatures in general, and good for every one in particular. And therefore the *Psalmist* observes, *That the Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 9. which is so universally true, that if it was left to our own choice, we could not possibly desire any thing better, nor so good as what befalls us, with all the circumstances that attend it.

HE that lives under a constant sense of this, must needs give thanks for every thing, as believing every thing to be for the best, and therefore adoring that infinite goodness that makes it so.

THIS therefore is the first thing required to our giving of thanks in every thing, even to acknowledge every thing to come from God, from wisdom, power and goodness itself, and by consequence, that it is the wisest, the greatest, and the best thing in its kind that it could be, all circumstances considered. But that we may be duly affected with it, so as to be truly thankful for it, as we acknowledge the infinite perfections of God in every thing that is, so we must likewise acknowledge our own imperfections and unworthiness of any thing that is good for us. For whatsoever God doth for us, if we think it is no more than what we have merited, or deserved at his hands, we can never heartily thank him for it, nor look

look upon ourselves as bound to do it: for no thanks are due to any one for paying what he owes us: But if it were possible for us to merit any thing at the hands of God, God himself would be indebted to us, not we to him, for that; and therefore, when he pays us, we must thank our selves rather than him for it: For by this rule, we did more than what we were bound to do for him, but he doth no more than what he was bound to do for us; in that he only pays us the wages, which we by our great care and pains had merited from him; for which we can be no way obliged to return him thanks: Insomuch that they who look upon themselves as over-righteous, and their works as meritorious before God, whatsoever they may pretend, they can never perform this duty as they ought; for they can never really think it a duty which they ought to perform, in that whatsoever God doth for them, they still fancy it to be no more than the price of their own works, for the payment whereof they are no way obliged to give him any thanks; or if they do, it is a work of supererogation, which he is bound to recompense some other way.

BUT why do I speak so much of that? For how can we poor sinful mortals ever do more than what we are bound to do for him, from whom we receive our very being, and by whom alone it is that we can do any thing? Alas! although we had been perfectly free both from original and actual sin; altho we were as pure and spotless as the holy angels themselves; altho all and every one of our thoughts, words, and actions had been exactly conformable to these wise and righteous laws, which he that made us, hath set before us; what is all this more than what we were before obliged to? Doth not reason itself dictate, doth not the holy scripture all along confirm it, doth not our great Master himself teach us with his own mouth, that *when we have done all things* that are commanded us, we are still to acknowledge, we are but *unprofitable servants, we have done what was our duty to do*, and no more? *Luke xvii. 10.*

BUT alas! How far are we from that? Which of us can say, that we have done all that was our duty to do? Or that we have done the thousandth part of it? Nay, which of us can say, that we ever did any one duty exactly as we ought to do it? *Is there a just man upon earth that doth good, and sinneth not*; whose works are so pure and perfect, that God himself can find no fault in them? I wish there were; but where to find them, I know not: But this I know, that our bad actions far exceed our good ones, both in weight and number, and that the very best we ever did are so imperfect, that they deserved not in themselves to be termed good: and by consequence, if we do merit any thing at the hands of God by them, it cannot be his grace and favour, but rather his wrath and fury. He may justly punish us, but cannot be obliged to reward us for them. So that, if we look no farther than the good works, if they may be so called, that we have done since we came into the world, we must needs acknowledge our selves unworthy of any of those blessings which God is pleased to bestow upon us; and therefore are bound to give him thanks for them, *Gen. xxxii. 10.* As the apostle himself also here intimates, in that he requires us to *give thanks* for every thing; which quite overthrows the pretended meritoriousness of good works: For if we must *give thanks for every thing*, be sure we can merit nothing by what we do; seeing all the glory of it must be ascribed to God, and not to us, and we must thank him, not our selves, for it.

BUT that we may do that aright, we must not only acknowledge that we never merited any favour or blessing from him, by the good works which we have endeavoured to perform, but likewise, that by our manifold sins and offences against him, we have justly deserved to have all the curses executed upon us, that he in his law hath threatened against wicked and sinful men; such as we cannot but all confess our selves to have been; being conscious to our selves that we were not only born, but also have lived in sin all our days, in all manner of sin, both of omission and commission; always doing what we ought not to do, or else not doing what we ought, at least not as we ought to do it. But every sin, as it is a transgression of God's law, it must needs be likewise an offence to his divine Majesty, who gives us our very life and being, and all the good things we have; and who may therefore justly deprive us of them, and lay all manner of punishment upon us, for any one sin that we ever committed: What then may he do for all; for all those many and horrid sins, which we all stand guilty of before him? Or rather, What may he not do? For we all lie at his mercy, and must confess, with the prophet, *That it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his com-*
passions

passions fail not, Lam. iii. 22. It is of his mercies, his infinite mercies and compassions, that we are here at this time, and not upon our sick-bed; that we are here, and not in prison; that we are here, and not in hell.

Now, he who thus acknowledgeth God's infinite wisdom, power and goodness in every thing that is, who acknowledgeth himself unworthy of having any thing that is good, and therefore acknowledgeth God's mercy also, as well as goodness in every good thing he hath, such a one may be truly said to give thanks in every thing; all the thanks that we can give to God, consisting only in such a recognition and acknowledgment of him, as I have now described. And therefore, in all the Old Testament, as I remember, there is no other word ever used by the Holy Ghost for our giving of thanks to God, but only such as signify our acknowledgment of him: As where it is said, *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever*. The words in the original are, *הסדו הדרו ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם* *Acknowledge to the Lord that he is good, that his mercy endureth for ever*, Psal. cvii. 1. where we may likewise see, what it is that we must acknowledge in God, in order to our thanking of him, even his goodness and his mercy. And this, as I could easily shew, is the constant language of the holy scriptures, wherein God was pleased at first to reveal his will to mankind: Whereby he hath plainly acquainted us, how he would have us to give him thanks, even by acknowledging him in every thing: Which therefore, whosoever doth, may be properly said to perform the duty enjoined in my text.

But here we must farther observe, that tho' this acknowledgment of God, wherein our gratitude or thankfulness consisteth, be seated only in the mind, and is indeed nothing else but a quick and lively sense of his infinite wisdom, power and goodness in every thing that happens to us; and of his infinite mercy in every good thing he bestows upon us; yet wheresoever it is sincere and true, it always manifests itself in our words and actions. In our words, by praising and magnifying those divine perfections which we acknowledge in all God's dispensations towards us. And therefore in *Hebrew*, the same word that signifies our acknowledging, or giving thanks, is used also for our praising God, to shew that they are both one and the same thing diversly expressed; the one in the heart only, the other also with the tongue, but so, that they always go together; for no man can be truly thankful to God, but he must needs praise him, and no man can heartily praise God, without being thankful to him: And therefore, he that would do either, must be sure to do both. He that would give thanks in every thing, must praise God for every thing; this being one of the ways which God himself hath prescribed, whereby to express our thankfulness unto him, even by praising and celebrating his great and glorious name, for his wisdom, and power, and goodness, and mercy, for all his infinite perfections, and his wonderful works to the sons of men in general, and to us in particular, whom he hath made, redeemed, and still preserves, on purpose to praise and glorify him, as we do this day.

But though this be one, it is not the only way whereby we ought to express our thankfulness to God our Almighty Creator, our most merciful Redeemer, and our continual Benefactor; for we must do it, *not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to his service, and walking in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life*. This is giving of thanks for every thing indeed; when we serve and glorify God in every thing we do: For this is an open and actual acknowledgment that we have nothing but what we receive from his goodness and mercy, by employing every thing we have to his honour and glory. By this means as every thing God doth, will afford matter of praise and thankfulness to us, so every thing we do, will be an expression of it to him; and so we shall fully and effectually perform the great and heavenly duty here enjoined by the apostle saying, *In every thing give thanks*.

In every thing; not only in some, or many, or most things; no nor only in all things in general, but in every thing particularly, without any exception, or mental reservation: We must give thanks in every thing; in every thing we have, in every thing we are, in every thing we do, and in every thing we suffer too. But then we must take special notice of the expression: It is not said, *for every thing*, but, *in every thing give thanks*: For sufferings, as such, cannot be properly the subject-matter of our praise and thankfulness, by reason of our natural aversion to them, and because, as such, they are the effects of God's displeasure, which

which we are bound to fear and dread above all things in the world, and therefore cannot be bound at the same time to praise and thank him for them. But howsoever, there is no suffering that befalls us in this world, but there is something in it that is designed for our good, and will really be so, if we do but make a right use of it: And that seems to be the reason why the apostle doth not say *for*, but *in every thing give thanks*; because altho there may be some things for which we cannot be obliged properly to give thanks, yet there is nothing in the world but hath something in it for which we ought to do it: as we shall see more plainly in the whole series of this discourse; wherein I shall endeavour to shew what cause we have to give thanks in every thing that any ways concerns us: as indeed all things in the world some way or other do. But howsoever, to make the discourse more useful and practical, I shall instance more especially in such things as more intimately concern us, as having a particular relation to our souls, bodies, or estates. And if we have cause to give thanks in all such things, there can be nothing in the world but we ought to do it in.

FIRST therefore, by these things which concern our souls, I mean all such things as have any relation to our present serving, or future enjoyment of God; to our being made holy here, and happy hereafter: For those are the things wherein our souls are principally concerned. And indeed we can never be sufficiently thankful that we have souls which are capable of such things as these, even of knowing, and honouring and enjoying God, and of being thankful to him that made them so, and that made them so on purpose that they might be thankful unto him for it, and for every thing else wherein he hath manifested his love and mercy to them: as what love, what mercy did he not manifest unto our souls, when he sent his only begotten Son into the world, for no other end but to redeem and raise them up from the state of sin and misery into which they were fallen? In which one instance, there were so many mercies contained, that we can never reckon them all up, much less acknowledge them as we ought: Yet howsoever, we ought to do it as well as we can, by giving thanks for every thing that the Son of God hath done or suffered for us: *for the mystery of his holy incarnation; for his holy nativity and circumcision; for his baptism, fasting, and temptation; for his agony and bloody sweat; for his cross and passion; for his precious death and burial; for his glorious resurrection and ascension; for his sitting on the right hand of God, and there making intercession for us; for his sending the Holy Ghost, and still continuing it in his church unto this day: In all, and every one of these, and such like things, which Christ hath done, or still is doing for us, we ought to be always giving thanks; it being only upon their account that we have any thing at all to be thankful for, or grace to be thankful for any thing we have.*

BUT as God would never have shewed us any mercy at all, except his Son had first satisfy'd his justice for our sins; so now there is no mercy whatsoever, but God, for his sake, is always ready to bestow it upon us. And whatsoever good things we have, we must acknowledge them all to come from God's mercy to us in his only Son, our only Saviour Christ; without whom we could never have had any one thing, that would have been really good for us; whereas there is nothing that either is or can be really good for us, but we either have, or may have it by him. And indeed how many and great blessings do we all at this time enjoy by him, for which we ought to be always giving thanks? By him, we were all born and bred in the best and purest part of his holy catholick church, now militant upon earth: By him, our church, after it had been oppressed many years, was miraculously restor'd again, and is still as wonderfully preserved, and will be so, I hope, to the end of the world: By him we enjoy the oracles of God in our own native tongue, so as to be able to consult them every day: By him we have his holy sacraments duly and constantly administered among us, according to his own institution and appointment: By him we can meet together in God's own house, to pray unto him, to praise his holy name, and hear his word every day in the week, and at his own table every Lord's-day to feed upon his mystical body and blood, so as to partake of all the merits of that death which he suffered for us: By him we are faithfully instructed in all things necessary to be known, believed, or done, in order to our salvation by him: By him we have a constant succession of bishops, priests, and deacons among us, to rule and govern us, to reprove, admonish, or correct us, if we do amiss; to resolve our doubts, to satisfy our scruples, to comfort the disconsolate, to relieve the afflicted, to strengthen the weak,

weak, and to guide and direct us all in the right way to bliss: By him we are constantly put in mind of our whole duty, both to God and man, how to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; how to fast and pray, and to give alms; how to be meek and humble, and loyal, and charitable and just in all our dealings; how to love, and fear, and serve, and honour, and obey God, and in every thing to give thanks unto him. In short, we have every thing, by the merits of our blessed Saviour, that can any way conduce to the making of our souls happy, and therefore must needs be obliged in every thing to give thanks to God, for him by whom we have it, as well as for every thing that we have by him.

AND although our bodies be not of so pure and spiritual a nature as our souls are; yet they likewise being maintain'd and redeemed too by Almighty God, we ought to give thanks in every thing relating to them also. It is true, our bodies are made of very coarse materials, of nothing but a little dust and earth; yet they are so wisely contrived, so curiously composed, so neatly, so artificially, so admirably ordered and put together, that we cannot but acknowledge and admire the wisdom and power of him that made them, in every part of them; as David did, saying, *I will praise thee, O Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth*, Psal. cxxxix. 14, 15. And considering the frailty and weakness of our mortal bodies, how prone they are to moulder away into their first principles, we cannot but acknowledge the goodness and mercy of God in their daily preservation, as well as his wisdom and power in their contexture and composition; for we see by daily experience, how little a thing is apt to disorder and put them out of tune, yet nevertheless we see too, how long we live in health, and strength, and vigour, both of body and mind; how the organs of our senses, as well as other members, are kept in tune for many years together, yea, and the very animal spirits too, which the soul makes use of in its operations. But who can see this, and not cry out with the aforesaid prophet, *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes*? Psal. cxviii. 23. It was he that made these earthly tabernacles at first, and it is he that upholds them every moment; inasmuch that should he but once let go his hold of them, they would immediately drop down to nothing: And therefore to him must the thanks and praise be given, for every moment that we either live, or move, or have any being at all.

AND what if our bodies be sometimes sick and out of tune? what a miracle of mercy is it, that they are not always so, as God might justly make them? and yet, in that very sickness, we have cause to give thanks, that we are still in the body, tho' it be in pain, or sick, and that that very pain or sickness of our bodies is designed by God, for the health and welfare of our souls, and that he is pleased by it to put us in mind of our latter end, and to prepare us for it, by mortifying our flesh with its affections and lusts, which otherwise would destroy our souls. In which respects I verily believe that sickness is a greater blessing than health itself to many persons, yea to all sincere Christians that make that use of it which God intends, and therefore cannot but give him thanks for it.

BUT what if this sickness ends in death? must we in that also give thanks? yes surely: For that also is no more than the death of the body, and so carries us only out of this vain, and troublesome, and sinful world, into that, where all that sleep in the Lord Jesus, enjoy perpetual rest and felicity. And they who desire to be there, cannot surely but thank God for all the methods that he is pleased to use, whereby to bring them thither; and particularly for taking them out of the body in order to it.

AND then, as for our outward estate and condition in this world, it cannot be denied but that we are continually subject to changes and alterations in it: but it cannot also but be acknowledged, that we have as much cause to thank God for every one, as for any of them. Are you rich and prosperous in the world? How came ye to be so? Was it by your own wisdom and cunning, by your own care and industry? No surely: There are many as wise, and cunning, and careful, and industrious as you can be, and yet live in penury and want. But whom then must you thank for your wealth and riches? None certainly but God: *It is his blessing that maketh rich*, Prov. x. 22. *It is he alone that giveth thee power to get wealth*, Deut. viii. 18. So that you are beholden to him for every foot of land, for every farthing of money, for every crumb of bread, for every drop of drink, for every rag of clothes you have

have in the world; and therefore must needs be bound to thank him for every thing you have: yea, and for what you have not too: For what he gives you, he knows will be really good for you, if you do but make a good use of it; but what he thinks good not to give you, you may be confident it would do you no good if you had it, but rather much hurt; and by consequence your not having it is a greater mercy than if you had it: so that you have the same cause to give thanks for every thing you have not, as for every thing you have.

AND herein, I dare say, I speak no more than what many here present have found true by their own experience; who having earnestly desired some temporal blessing, as they thought it to be, and being disappointed of it, have afterwards plainly seen that it was much better for them not to have it than to have it; and therefore that their disappointment was a far greater mercy than the thing itself would have been: and by consequence, that they have more cause to thank God for with-holding it from them, than if he had bestow'd it upon them. This we our selves may easily observe in many things; from whence we may conclude it holds good in all, tho we do not always take notice of it: But tho we cannot see the event of things, what will, or what will not do us good, God doth, and if we leave it to him, we may rest satisfy'd in our minds, that he will take care that we shall have nothing that may do us hurt, as well as all things that are good for us; and so in every thing give thanks unto him.

AND what if God should see good not only to with-hold what we desire, but also to withdraw something from us, which he hath already bestowed upon us? That I confess at first sight may seem to us very severe and hard: But if God sees good to do it, we may be sure it is so; and therefore must give him thanks, not only that we once had it, and that we had it so long, but likewise that we had it no longer; that he continued it to us so long as he saw it might be good for us, and took it from us so soon as he saw it might do us hurt. For this we have the famous example of *Job*, who was stripped of all his children and his whole estate in one day, and left as bare and naked as he came into the world, and yet was so far from repining at it, that he immediately gave God his humble and hearty thanks for it, saying, *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,* Job i. 21.

BUT while we are in this mortal body we are liable to many other troubles and calamities, besides these abovemention'd. It is true we are so; but it is as true also, that no man ever suffer'd so much in this world, as God might justly have laid upon him: but whatsoever happens we may still say with *Ezra*, that *God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve*, Ezra ix. 13. So that in the midst of all the judgments we meet with here below, there is some mercy for which we ought to give thanks, if it was for nothing else, but that the judgment is no greater than it is, but far less than it might have been: But besides that, the very punishment itself is a token of God's love: For *whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons*, Heb. xii. 6, 7. And certainly that is no small favour, that Almighty God himself should treat us like his own children. But why doth he ever chasten us? Not for his own pleasure, but for our profit, *that we might be partakers of his holiness*, ver. 10. of his holiness; the greatest blessing that we can ever have; yet that is designed for us in every chastisement that God is pleased to lay upon us. He intends not only to do us good, but to make us good by it; to take off our minds from sin and the world, and to incline them wholly to him, and his wise and righteous laws; which *David* found to be the happy effect of all his troubles, saying, *Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I have kept thy word*, Psal. cxix. 67. and, *Therefore it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes*, ver. 71. From whence it comes to pass, that, as *St. Paul* assures us, *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17. And this hath been the constant experience of all that truly love and fear God in all ages. They have still reaped more spiritual profit and advantage from their troubles, than from all the outward comforts they ever enjoy'd. And altho we cannot always see it so plainly here, yet when we come into the other world, where God will discover to us the reasons of all his dealings with us here below, we shall then perfectly behold and admire God's goodness and mercy to us in every thing that befel us: We shall then clearly see,

see, that the very troubles and crosses we have met with, were not only profitable, but so necessary for us, that but for them, we had been ruin'd and undone for ever, and therefore would not have been without any one of them for all this world. In short, we shall then see the truth of the apostle's assertion, *That all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*, Rom. viii. 28. and by consequence, that no one thing ever happen'd to us, but what we have cause to give thanks for; and that too, in our spiritual estate, as well as temporal. For whilst we are in the body, we are subject, not only to the troubles of the world, but likewise to temptations from the devil. But whatsoever may be his end in tempting, be sure God's end in suffering it, is only for our good; to make us more humble and vile in our own eyes, more sober and vigilant against our ghostly enemies, more fervent and sincere in our prayers to God, more frequent and devout in our addresses to Christ at his holy table, and more constant in the exercise of all such graces and virtues as are necessary in that case; as of meekness, and patience, and courage, and faith, and trust on the promises of God, and the merits and intercession of our blessed Saviour, to assist and enable us, not only to withstand but conquer the temptation, and grow better by it: by which means we have cause to give thanks, even in every temptation that assaults us: how much more, for every one of these spiritual mercies that God is pleased to vouchsafe unto us, for every motion of his Holy Spirit, for every check of our own consciences, for every reproof of his holy word, for every grace we have, for every good work we do, and for every bad one that we do not, for every truth that he hath reveal'd to us, for every promise he made us, for every command that he hath laid upon us, for every advice and counsel that he hath given us to leave our sins, and return to him, to be holy and righteous in all our ways, and *in every thing to give thanks* to him; as he doth this day?

For this is that which in his name I now advise and beseech you all to do, that you would *not be only bearers, but doers of the word*. Ye have heard that it is your duty to give thanks in every thing, and what cause you have to do it; go ye therefore and do likewise. *In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*. It is God's will, and therefore your duty. It is God's will in Christ Jesus concerning you, and therefore it must needs be your interest too. For now that Christ hath suffer'd all the punishments which were due to you, ye may be sure that nothing is either laid upon you, or requir'd of you by God, but what is really for your good and profit: As this doubtless is as much, if not more than any other duty whatsoever: For to give thanks in every thing, is the way never to be discompos'd or disturb'd at any thing; but always chearful and pleasant, rejoicing in the goodness and love of God, manifested in every thing that happens to us. This is the way to turn all our seeming troubles into real mercies, and to make every thing that God either doth or gives to us, to be good for us: For, as the apostle says, *Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving*; 1 Tim. iv. 4. So that by this means no evil can ever befall us; For whatsoever befalls us, shall do us good. Yea, this is the way to antedate the joys of the other world; to live heaven upon earth; to be fellow-commoners with the glorified saints and angels, even whilst we are in the body: For tho we know but little else of what they do or have above; yet this we know, that they are always giving praise and thanks to God, and that it is their pleasure and delight to do it. For thus St. John beheld them employing and recreating themselves in singing hallelujahs to the most high God, and crying out, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour, and glory, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created*, Rev. iv. 11. And again *Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen*. Chap. vii. 12. This is their work, and this is their pleasure too. And so far as we sincerely praise and thank God, so far we do as they do, and enjoy what they enjoy, before we come to them; and so shall be duly prepared and qualify'd to be admitted into their blessed society, and to join with them in adoring and magnifying the Almighty Creator, and most gracious Governor of the world, and in giving thanks to him for every thing he ever did, either to us, or for us; thro his only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ: *To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and praise and thanks, for ever and ever*.

S E R M O N C V I I I .

All things to be done to the Glory of God.

I C O R. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

AS ever we desire to live well and do good in the world, we must take special care to direct our lives and actions all to a right and good end. For though a good end can never make a bad action good, yet a bad end always makes an action bad: be the matter of it never so plainly commanded by God, and the manner of our doing it never so agreeable to his revealed will; yet, after all, the action itself cannot be good, unless the end for which we do it be so. For it will fail in one of the most necessary causes and qualifications requir'd to it: And that is one great reason that there is so little good ever done in the world, because men seldom make that which is truly good the end of any thing, much less of all things they do. All men, as they are understanding and free agents, propound some end or other to themselves in all their actions; and it is always something which they apprehend to be good and convenient for them, and think they may be better and happier with it than without it, otherwise they would not desire it, nor do any thing for it. But most men being led more by fancy, than by reason or religion, are apt to mistake that for good, which is not so; and through that mistake spoil all their actions, by directing that to a wrong end.

THIS is the case of all who labour only to get a livelihood in the world; of all who design nothing but to enrich themselves; of all who lay out themselves wholly to advance their families; of all who aim no higher than at sensual delights and pleasures; of all who aspire at the imaginary honour and grandeur of this world; of all who court the multitude, and strive above all things to be thought wise, or great, or good, or ingenious, or learned, or valiant, or any thing more than ordinary among men: This indeed is the case of all that make any thing in this world the end of their living and labours in it. Their labours are all lost, they live to no purpose; for they never do any one good work: those things they aim at in all their actions, having nothing of real worth and goodness in them; nothing of truth or certainty; nothing of happiness or satisfaction to the mind; nothing but what is below and inferior to them as men; nothing that can either make them, or do them good, or contribute any thing towards it.

YE cannot but all acknowledge the condition of such men to be very sad and deplorable: For as they never do any good in this world, they can never receive any in the next; but as they spend their time in doing ill, they must spend eternity in suffering for it. And yet this is the case of most men in the world, and I fear of most here present. Neither is there any way whereby it is possible for any of us to avoid it, without turning our eyes for the future to their proper object, and making that the great end and design in all our actions which God himself hath prescribed to us. What that is, we need not go far to seek, having it

here under his own hand, and deliver'd to us by his apostle, saying, *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* From whence it is evident at first sight, that it is the will and pleasure of him that made us, that his glory be the end not only of the greatest, but of the least, not only of some, but of all the actions of our whole life. So that whatsoever is not done to this end, is not done according to the will of God, and therefore can never be good and acceptable in his sight.

THIS therefore being a thing that is not only very good in itself, but that without which nothing we do is good, we cannot but look upon ourselves as highly concern'd to understand the true nature and grounds of it; for which purpose therefore we shall consider,

- I. WHAT we are to understand by the glory of God.
- II. WHAT it is properly to do any thing for the glory of God.
- III. IN what sense we ought to do all things for that end.
- IV. WHY we ought to do so.

I. THE first question must be first resolved, because the others depend upon that; and it is not so easy a matter to do it as it may seem at first sight. For tho the glory of God be often mention'd in scripture, and we often speak of it in our common discourse, yet it is not so commonly understood. It is the glory of the supreme Being of the world, and therefore so great, so resplendent, so infinite, that we cannot cast our eyes upon it, but they are immediately dazzled; we cannot think of it, but our thoughts are presently confounded: How then can we find words whereby to express and declare it? Howsoever I shall by his leave and assistance, of whom I speak, offer at something towards it, that we may understand what the scriptures mean by the glory of God: But lest I should say any thing unbecoming of it, and so disparage rather than explain it, I shall keep as close as I can to God's own word, who best knows his own glory, and has been pleased to give us as much light into it, as he thought good and needful for us, as in other places of scripture, so especially in that, where he condescended so far as to discourse with Moses upon this very subject, *Exod. xxxiii.*

FOR there we read, that *Moses pitch'd the tabernacle without the camp, and called it, אהרל מועד, The tabernacle of the congregation, or rather, as the word signifies, The tabernacle of meeting, where God would meet his people, and be found of those who sought him, ver. 7.* And accordingly when *Moses enter'd into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses, ver. 9.* We often find in scripture, God's special presence signified by a cloud hovering over the place where he was pleas'd to exhibit it. And it is sometimes said, that *the glory of the Lord appear'd in it, or with it, as Exod. xvi. 10. and xl. 34, 35. 1 Kings viii. 10. like a devouring fire, Exod. xxiv. 17. or an extraordinary brightness and light shining in or near the cloud.* As at our Saviour's birth it is said, *The glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds, Luke ii. 9.* But at this time *Moses saw no such light or glory appearing in the cloud.* He only saw a cloud, and heard a voice coming out of it, but did not see him that spoke it; and therefore desired, and made it his humble request, that he might see his glory, and his way, so that he might know him, saying, *Now therefore I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me thy way, that I may know thee, ver. 13.* He did not ask to see God himself, but his way; that is, his way or manner of working and manifesting himself in the world. So the *Rabbins* say, that by the *ways of God* are understood, מדות, his properties or perfections, which he exerteth in the government of the world. And so doth *David* himself, where he saith, *The Lord made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel, Psalm ciii. 7.*

AFTER this, *Moses* desires the same thing again in other words, saying to God, *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory, ver. 18.* To which God answer'd, *I will make my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, ver. 19.* This was a full answer to *Moses's* request; but lest *Moses* should mistake his meaning, he adds, *Thou canst not see my face: For there shall no man see me, and live, ver. 20.* As if he had said, if by my glory thou meanest my face, my very essence or nature, that cannot be seen by any mortal; but I will shew thee as much of my glory as mortals are capable of seeing, by causing my goodness to pass, and proclaiming my name before thee. For which purpose saith he, *Thou shalt stand upon this*

this rock, and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by thee, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand, while I pass by. And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back-parts; but my face shall not be seen, ver. 21, 22, 23. Where, as by his face we are to understand his essential glory, or his divine itself, wherein all his perfections concenter, or rather are all but one and the same perfection; so by his back-parts we may understand the emanations of his said essential glory, or the manifestations it maketh of itself in the exercise of its divine perfections in the government of the world, and particularly in respect to mankind; which last shew forth the glory of God *a posteriori*, by its effects and consequents, although *a priori* we can see nothing of it. As we can neither see nor know any thing of the sun, what it is in itself, but we behold its glory in its light and heat, and many wonderful effects which it produceth upon the earth.

THAT this is the proper meaning of the promise which God here made to *Moses*, is evident from his manner of fulfilling it. God had promised him to make all his goodness and his glory pass before him, and to shew him his back-parts. Now in the next chapter, where this promise is fulfill'd, it is written, *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, (or as the words may be render'd, That he will not utterly destroy) visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the childrens children, unto the third, and to the fourth generation, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* Here the Jews reckon up thirteen properties of God, whereof only one is vindictive, and that too is the last. These be sure are the ways of God, as *David* himself observes, *Psalms ciii. 7, 8. and cxlv. 6, 7, 8.* These are those divine perfections which he displays, and manifesteth in the world, and especially towards mankind; and that therefore is properly called the glory of God, which shines forth in the manifestation of these perfections. As where our Saviour said to *Martha*, *Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?* John xi. 40. that is, his infinite power, and goodness, and mercy, manifested in raising her dead brother to life. Hence the Seraphims cry'd one to another, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory, Isa. vi. 3.* that is, of his divine properties exerted and manifested in all his works. This is properly the glory of God, and that so great, so infinitely great, that although it shine continually about us, so that unless we shut our eyes, we cannot but see it as clearly as we do the light of the sun at noon-day; yet we are not able to comprehend it, but must cry out with the apostle, where speaking of God's mercy, he saith, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: To whom be glory for ever, Rom. xi. 33, 36.*

BUT being got upon the place where God was pleas'd to proclaim his name, and to make his glory and goodness pass before *Moses*, I cannot leave it, till I have farther observed, that altho there be several other names and properties of God commonly attributed to him in his holy word, besides those which are there specified and particularly mentioned, yet they are all included or imply'd in one or other of them. His great essential name *Jehovah*, *The Lord*, is twice us'd, once singly, or by itself, and again with *God*, *The Lord, The Lord God*. The first, I humbly conceive, signifies what he is in himself, without respect to his creatures; as his existence in and of himself, his simplicity, his immensity, his omnipresence, his omniscience, his immutability, his eternity, and many such perfections, which we are not able to comprehend, are all contain'd in his name *Jehovah*, signifying being, or essence itself: But where it is us'd with the word *God*, it seems to denote all those perfections, which he manifesteth in the creation and government of the world, and all things in it, as his wisdom, his omnipotence, his goodness, his all-sufficiency, his authority and supreme dominion, which he exerciseth in and over all and every creature that is. And so *The Lord God* is the same; as if he had said, *The Lord, the Almighty, All-wise, All-good Creator, Preserver, and Governour of all things: This he speaks of himself, with reference to the whole creation.* But the rest of the properties here mentioned, as his mercy, his grace, his long-suffering, his abundance in goodness, or bounty, and truth, his keeping mercy for thousands, his forgiving iniquities, transgression, and sin, &c. have all respect to mankind in a particular manner. And by the last I nam'd, his *forgiving*, or as the word

word signifies, *his taking away iniquity, transgression, and sin*, he plainly shews his special love to them, in sending his Son, *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*

THESE are those divine perfections wherein the glory of God appeareth especially to us, and wherein he is so transcendently, so infinitely glorious, that no man can think of them as he ought, but he must needs admire and adore him. As *Moses* did, who had no sooner heard them proclaim'd, but he *made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped*, *Exod. xxxiv. 8.* And tho we never heard them proclaim'd as he did, yet we see them continually shining forth towards ourselves and in all things else: As *David* saith, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work*, *Psal. xix. 1.* because his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, appear so clearly in them. And hence it is, that when we acknowledge any of his divine perfections, and testify the same either by words or deeds, we are said to *glorify him*. As when *Christ* had rais'd a dead man to life at *Nain*, it is said, that *the people glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited his people*, *Luke vii. 15.* They acknowledg'd God's truth, his goodness and mercy, in visiting his people, and raising up a great prophet among them; and this is call'd their glorifying him. And therefore to glorify God, is oppos'd to speaking ill of him: *On their part he is evil spoken of, on your part he is glorified*, *1 Pet. iv. 14.* And wheresoever God is said to be glorified, as he often is in the holy scriptures, this was the way whereby it was done: Neither is there any other way whereby it is possible for us to glorify so glorious a being as he is, but only by acknowledging and admiring his glory; and therefore *St. Paul* saith, that *He shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*, *2 Thess. i. 10.* that is, he shall be glorified, by being admired in them for the infinite goodness that he hath manifested to them; I say, his goodness, because that implies all the perfections which he exerteth in them, and so is the same with his glory; as appears from his own words to *Moses* before quoted. For having first said, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee*, *Exod. xxxiii. 19.* he afterwards saith, *When my glory passeth by*, *ver. 22.* whereby he gives us to understand, that his glory is nothing else but his goodness shining forth in all his works; and by consequence that his goodness in this place doth not signify any one, but all his perfections manifested in the world; and the more they are manifest, the more he is glorified. And therefore our blessed Saviour, in his prayer to his Father, having first said, *I have glorified thee on the earth*, he after shews how he did it, saying, *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world*, *John xvii. 4, 6.* And thus it is that we must glorify God, if we ever do it at all, even by manifesting his name, that is, himself, or which is the same, his perfections in the world; for herein it is that his glory properly consisteth. And whensoever we speak of the glory of God, we mean nothing else but these his divine properties, as display'd and manifested in the world, which are therefore call'd *his glory*, *Eph. iii. 16.* I have insisted the longer upon this, because it will help us to understand the next question aright, even what it is properly to do any thing *to the glory of God*: For seeing that *the glory of God* is nothing else but the manifestation of him, and his perfections in the world, hence it necessarily follows, that he who doth any thing for that end and purpose, that God and his perfections may be better manifested in the world, may be truly said to do it *for the glory of God*. Altho God, as the psalmist saith, *be good to all, and his mercy is over all his works*, so that all reasonable creatures, whose hearts are pure and holy, cannot but see him in every thing that is; yet mankind being corrupted and defiled with sin, are apt to live as without God in the world, taking no more notice of him than a blind man doth of the sun, which he cannot see tho it shine never so clearly. Now when a man doth any thing whereby the goodness, the wisdom, the power, the mercy, or any of the properties of the most high God, is made more manifest and evident in the eyes of men, than otherwise it would be, so that they may see and admire him, such a one glorifies God; and if he doth it with that intention and design, and no other, then he properly doth it *for the glory of God*.

THAT this is the true and genuine sense of the phrase, as it is us'd in my text, appears from the context itself: For the apostle is here speaking of eating such things as are offer'd in sacrifice to idols; and saith, that *it is not unlawful to eat of them*, but only in the case of scandal and offence which may be taken at it: As if a

Christian

Christian be invited to eat with unbelievers, who sometimes had such meat at their tables as had been offer'd at an idol altar; the Christian might lawfully go thither: But if any one should say to him, This is offer'd in sacrifice to such or such an idol, as suppose to *Jupiter, Diana, Ceres, &c.* in that case the Christian ought not to eat of it, for his sake who shewed it: For in that he told him, that it was offer'd to such an idol; he thereby shewed, that he thought if the Christian really believed what he professed, he would not eat of it; that being accounted among the heathen, as an acknowledging the idol to be God, and a considerable honour done to it, as such. In which case therefore the Christian ought not to eat of it, lest he should seem to acknowledge any other God but the Creator of the world, and so give occasion to the unbelievers to think, that for all his professing to worship none but him, the true God, yet he is not so fully persuaded of it, but that that he can join with them in doing honour to other Gods besides him; at least, when he can thereby gratify his palate, and the company he is in: From whence the unbelievers might take occasion to think better of their idols, and worse of the true God, whom the Christians profess to worship. Which would be a great dishonour to him, by encouraging others to continue in the worship of false gods, and so hindering them from giving that honour to the true God, which is due unto him. In this case therefore the apostle would not have Christians eat of any thing that is offer'd to idols. And then having prov'd that this doth not infringe their Christian liberty, but that they may lawfully eat of any thing without scruple, where they can do it without offence; he lays down this as a general rule, to be observed upon all occasions, *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* And then he adds, *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:* that is, do nothing whereby others may be offended at your religion, or from whence they may take occasion to think or speak evil of the God you worship; but rather carry yourselves so among all you converse with, that they may see and acknowledge his majesty, and dominion over the world: As in this case; If upon notice given you, that such a thing is offer'd to an idol, you refuse to partake of it; both he that told you of it, and others, will thereby clearly see, that you are fully persuaded in your conscience, that the God you worship is the only true God; and that he is so great, so glorious, so mighty, and so righteous a Being, that ye dare not do any thing whereby you may seem to own any other god, and so dishonour and displease him; which may be a means of putting others also upon thinking as highly and honourably of him, as you do, and so may be persuaded to serve and worship him as they ought. This is, in short, the apostle's scope and design in this place: From whence it plainly appears, that where he saith, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,* his meaning is, that all men, especially Christians, should make this the great end of all their actions, that Almighty God may be better known, acknowledged, admired, and honoured in the world: And therefore this must needs be the proper meaning of doing any thing to the glory of God.

BUT lest this should not be so well understood by all, as I could wish it was, I shall endeavour to explain it by some known instances. When *Abraham* had received the promise from God, that *in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed*; altho, his age and circumstances consider'd, the thing might seem impossible to be done; yet, as the apostle saith, *he staggered not at the promise of God thro' unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform,* Rom. iv. 20, 21. By this means he gave glory to God, even by being strong in faith, and fully persuaded of his truth and power to perform what he had promised, how impossible soever it might seem to be. So here, he that doth any thing, whereby to demonstrate to the world, that he is fully persuaded of God's wisdom, goodness, truth, power, or the like, he doth it to the glory of God, because God by that means may be better known and admired in the world.

HENCE it is, that our Saviour calls his disciples *The light of the world*, Mat. v. 14. because by them men may see the goodness of God, as they see his works by the light of the sun. And therefore he adds, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,* ver. 16. Tho he would not have them do good works therefore only that men may see them; yet he would have them do them so that men may see them, and glorify God, by

acknowledging his grace and goodness in them. And this is properly their doing them *to the glory of God*: Which plainly appears in every good work a man doth; because he thereby sets forth God's authority over the world, his goodness in what he hath commanded, and his grace, and mercy, and power, in enabling men to act accordingly. And therefore our Lord elsewhere also saith to his disciples, *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*, John xv. 8. And St. Paul prays that the *Philippians might be filled with the fruits of righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God*, Phil. i. 11. And when our Lord hath told St. Peter, that *when he was old, he should stretch forth his hands, and another should gird him, and carry him whither he would not*: St. John saith, that *he spake this, signifying by what death he should glorify God*, John xxi. 19. Because his laying down his life, as he afterwards did, upon a cross, for Christ's sake, was as great a demonstration as he could give, of his being fully persuaded of God's truth and goodness revealed in the gospel. By this the apostle saith he should *glorify God*, or this he should do to the glory of God. From all which it is evident, that the doing of a thing to the glory of God, is the same with doing it therefore that God may be glorified: that is, as I have shewn, that these divine perfections, which he exerteth in the world, may be seen, admired, and praised as they ought.

THIS the apostle saith should be the end of all our actions: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*. He instanceth particularly in eating and drinking, because, as I observed, he is here speaking of eating things offered in sacrifice to an idol. But lest we should think that he intended it only for that case, he makes it a general rule to be observed in all and every action of our life, that *whenever we eat or drink*, upon any other occasion as well as that, and *whatsoever else we do*, we still must do it for this end, even for *the glory of God*. But then the next question is, In what sense we ought to do all things for this end, that God may be thus glorified, and so to the glory of God: Which may be justly made a question: for if we should understand it in the strictest sense, as if a man was bound, in every particular action of his life, to be still thinking and aiming at the glory of God, his thoughts would be so continually taken up with the end, that he would not have time enough to employ about the means of effecting it, and so fail in the manner of doing his duty, by being too intent upon the end for which he doth it. And besides, there are many lawful and necessary things to be done in a man's life, which he may not at first sight perceive how they tend to the glory of God, altho they really do so: And therefore should a man do nothing before he is sure it will conduce to that end, he will be often forc'd to neglect or omit many necessary duties upon a groundless fear, that they will not be for the glory of God: whereby he would be involved in all such difficulties, as would make his life both uncomfortable to himself, and useless to the world. These and many such inconveniences would follow, upon our taking this rule in so strict a sense. But how then is it to be understood?

FIRST, It is to be so understood, that we ought always to be very tender of the glory of God, so as never to do any thing, nor suffer any thing to be done, if we can help it, which may tend to his dishonour, by giving others occasion to think or speak evil of him, or of that religion and worship which we profess to perform out of duty to him. That the words are to be understood at least in this sense, is plain from what I discours'd before, concerning the occasion of them in the context. And that it is as plain, that this is indispensibly required of us, from the very nature of true religion which we all profess, and from the constant practice of those who have sincerely professed it, I shall instance only in *two or three*.

WHEN God had threaten'd to destroy the children of *Israel* for their rebellion against him, *Moses* was so concern'd for the glory of God, that he earnestly besought him not to do it only upon that account; for, saith he, *If thou shalt kill this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness*, Numb. xiv. 15, 16. and Deut. ix. 28. He feared it would be a dishonour to God, and therefore did all he could to prevent it. Yea, so zealous was he for the glory of God, that at another time he chose, he desired that his own name should be blotted out of the book of life, rather than God's name should be dishonoured: *And now, saith he, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written*, Exod. xxxii. 32. which was certainly the highest expression that

that could be of his great zeal for the glory of God, and of his fear lest any thing should be done, which might reflect upon his power and goodness.

THE same may be said of *Joshua*: When the children of *Israel* were smitten before the men of *Ai*, *Joshua* rent his clothes, and prostrated himself before the Lord, saying, O Lord, what shall I say, when *Israel* turneth their backs before their enemies? For the *Canaanites*, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round about, and cut off our name from the earth; and what wilt thou do unto thy great name? *Josh. vii. 8, 9.* As if he had said, Thou hast promised to give us this land; and if, instead of getting it, we be destroy'd in it, what will the people say? How will they blaspheme thy name, as being unfaithful to thy promise, or unable to perform it? This was that which he was most troubled at, as we should all be at every thing that may give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, (as *Nathan* said to *David*, 2 Sam. xii. 14.) Be sure *St. Paul* was so: for seeing many who profess'd themselves to be Christians, walking so as to be a scandal and reproach to Christ and his religion, it cut him to the heart, and drew tears from his eyes: *Many*, saith he, *walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things, Phil. iii. 18, 19.* But what would *St. Paul* have said, if he had liv'd in this age, when there are so many millions who profess the faith of Christ, and yet so few, so very few, but who dishonour his sacred name, crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, by their lewd and wicked lives? This would have gone near to have broke his heart; and so it must needs do, to all who sincerely love God and Christ above all things, as he did, and all true Christians still do. And if we would manifest ourselves to be such, we must always have the same zeal for God, and our blessed Saviour, so as to do all we can in our several places, that his holy name may not be profaned and dishonoured by others; especially, we must take care that we never do it ourselves: And for that purpose, whensoever we meet with any thing, as we often do, wherein the honour of God is concern'd, we must do all we can for it; but nothing against it, tho we were sure to gain the whole world by it. As we see in the holy martyrs, who rather than they would sacrifice, or burn incense to an idol, and so dishonour the true God, by seeming to own any other, they chose to part with all they had in the world, and with their lives too. And though we should never be so happy as to be put upon such a trial, yet howsoever we must shew our good will and readiness for it, if there be occasion, by preferring the glory of God before our temporal interest, and every thing that is near or dear to us in this world: so that if it comes to that point, that we must either do something which may cast a reflection upon Almighty God, and his holy religion, or else suffer some great pain, or shame, or loss to ourselves; we are chearfully to choose the latter, so as to suffer any thing ourselves, rather than the glory of our great Creator, and most merciful Redeemer, should suffer any thing by us. For this is the lowest sense wherein we are to do all things to the glory of God, even by doing nothing at all against it.

I CALL this the lowest sense in which these words can be understood: For they certainly require us to go higher, even so far, as in the next place to make it the main scope and business of our lives to promote the honour and glory of God, according to the several abilities and opportunities which he is pleased to give us for that purpose. And if we do that, whether we always think of it or no, we may be truly said to do all things to the glory of God, because all things we do, are design'd in general for that end: As a covetous man, who makes it his great drift and design, through the whole course of his life, to get money, altho he do not think of it in every particular action, yet he is properly said to do all things for that end, and no other. And it would be a horrid shame, if the men of this world should be more diligent and industrious, in carrying on their little designs of advancing themselves and families in the world, than we are in promoting the great end of our lives, the honour of that Almighty Being in whom we live. This therefore is that which we are here commanded, even to propose this to ourselves, as the chief end and design of our lives, that God may be better known, admired, honoured, and glorified in the world, than he would be, if we were not in it; and for that purpose to leave nothing undone, whereby that end may be attained.

As for example: God is glorified by the constant performing our publick devotions to him with reverence and godly fear; and therefore we ought constantly so

to perform them. He is glorified by our praising his holy name, as he himself saith, *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me*, Psalm l. 23. and therefore we ought to praise him every day. He is glorified in the holy sacrament, as it is the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving; and therefore we should take all occasions of receiving it. He is glorified by our submission to the higher powers, in obedience to him who set them over us; and therefore we ought to be subject *not only for wrath, but for conscience sake*. He is glorified by our patient and chearful bearing whatsoever he sees good to lay upon us; and therefore whatsoever it is, we are to bear it patiently and chearfully. He is glorified by our believing what he hath said, and trusting on what he hath promised; and therefore whatsoever he hath said or promis'd, we are to believe and trust on it. He is glorified by our abstaining *from all appearance of evil*; and therefore whatsoever appears to be evil, we must abstain from it. He is glorified by all the good works we do; and therefore we must do all we can. In short, he is glorified by our living in a constant and sincere obedience to all his laws; and therefore we must constantly and sincerely endeavour to obey them all, thro the whole course of our lives: For as the apostle saith, *By breaking the law we dishonour God*, Rom. ii. 23. So by keeping it, we glorify him; because hereby we demonstrate to the world, that we are fully persuaded that he is our supreme Lord and Governor; and that all the laws that he hath set us, are like himself, holy, and wise, and just, and good. And therefore in order to our doing all things, as we ought, *to the glory of God*, it is necessary that we make it the great end we aim at, and design all along in all our thoughts, words, and actions, to approve ourselves to him, by observing his laws to the utmost of our knowledge and power, in the respective places, relations, offices, conditions, and circumstances, wherein he hath set us: according to that excellent rule in St. Peter, which may serve as a commentary upon my text, *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: To whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever*, 1 Pet. iv. 11.

BUT this is not all neither; for this command, *Do all things to the glory of God*, plainly implies, that we must not only make this the chief end of our actions in general, but we must aim at it as much as we can, in every thing we do, that is of weight and moment: As *David set the Lord always before him*, Psalm xvi. 8. so we ought to have him and his glory always in our eye; and undertake nothing of consequence, but with respect to that end. Much to the same purpose is that of the apostle, where he saith, *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*, Col. iii. 17. which command I do not see how it can be observed as it ought, unless we have an eye to Christ in whatsoever we do, and give thanks, or glorify God the Father by him, for enabling us to do it. So here, where we are commanded by the most high God, our Maker, to *do all things to his glory*, it is plainly his divine will and pleasure, that whatsoever we set about, we should look up to him, and therefore do it, that we may some way or other glorify him by it.

As, if a man goes to church, he must go with a design to glorify God there, and to be instructed, directed, and assisted to do it better afterwards. If a man follows his particular calling, as all ought to do, he must therefore do it, that he and his family may have wherewith to serve and glorify God in their generations. If a man undertake an office, or charge, or trust, he must therefore undertake it, that he may glorify God in the faithful discharge of it. If a man buys, or sells, or makes any contract, or bargain, he should do it so justly and honestly, as to shew he fears God, and so glorify him in the doing of it. If a man sets upon the learning of any art, or trade, or science, or language, he should therefore do it, that he may be better qualified and capacitated to glorify God, than otherwise he would be. If a man erects a school, or hospital, gives an alms to the poor, or exerciseth any sort of charity, he should do it only in obedience to God, and for his glory. If a man be in any company, he should discourse and converse with them so as may most conduce to this end; according to the apostle's rule, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*, and so glory to God, Eph. iv. 29. The apostle in my text goes much lower, saying, that if a man *eats or drinks, he should do it to the glory of God*; not only by begging his blessing upon it, and returning him thanks for it, but by doing it for that end and purpose, that he may serve and glorify God both in his soul and body, which are his.

THUS

THUS I might instance in all the main actions of a man's life, and shew that they ought to be all directed to this, as their ultimate end; I say, ultimate, because a man may doubtless propose other ends besides this, to himself, in what he doth: But they ought to be such as resolve themselves at last into this. As in eating and drinking, a man may aim at the preserving his body in health and vigour; but so, that he may employ that health and vigour in the service, and for the glory of God. In the use of the means of grace, a man may aim at his obtaining the grace of God; but he should aim at that only, that he may glorify God by it. And in whatsoever a man doth in order to it, he may lawfully aim at his own salvation, and have an eye to the recompence of reward; but that should be in order to his glorifying God for ever. So that this ought to be the ultimate or last end of all our actions; in respect of which, all other ends, which we propose to ourselves, should be but as means that tend to it: Otherwise we can never obey this command which our Almighty Creator hath here laid upon us by his apostle, saying, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

THIS, I confess, at first sight, may seem a very hard lesson: At least, I fear it is but seldom practised; mankind in general looking no farther than to gratify their flesh with the pleasures, their eyes with the riches, or their fancies with the honours of this world. One or other of these is the only end that most men aim at in every thing they do. But that reasonable creatures, and such too as pretend to be Christians, should make such things as these the end of any, much more of all their actions, is one of the most unaccountable things in nature. There can be no reason assign'd for it, except this one, That reasonable creatures themselves will act without reason, and against it too; suffering their appetites, their passions, or their humours to over-power their judgments, and put out, or stifle that little light that is within them; so that they can look no farther than to such things as are present, and lie just before them, even the little inconsiderable trifles of this world, which can never do them any real good, as their own reason, if it was duly consulted, would soon convince them: And so it would too, that there is nothing in this world worth our aiming at, but the glory of God; but that that will answer all the ends we can in reason propose to ourselves in any thing we do, and by consequence ought to be first and chiefly intended; which is the last thing I promised to shew.

AND it is a thing that may be easily done. I need not go from my text for it. For we cannot but all acknowledge, that there is all the reason in the world that the will of him that made us, and gives us power to act, should be the rule and standard of all our actions. But here we see, that he hath declared it to be his will, that *whatsoever we do, we should do it to his glory.* And if it be his will, it must needs be our duty: And we are bound always to observe it, as ever we desire that any thing we do, should be good and acceptable in his sight.

ALTHO this be reason enough, why we ought to do all things to the glory of God, and we ought to do so only for that reason; yet, to explain and press it a little farther, we may observe, that God being infinitely wise, and good, whatsoever end he proposeth to himself in what he doth, must needs be the wisest and the best that can be: and that we and all who are capable of it, are bound to imitate him as near as we can; *to be holy, as he is holy*, 1 Pet. i. 15. and *to be followers of God as dear children*, Eph. v. 1. and so to carry on the same designs, and to aim at the same end as he doth, in every thing that we do by him. But whatsoever he doth, he doth it only for his own glory; as the wise man saith, *The Lord hath made all things for himself*, Prov. xvi. 4. *For himself*, that is, for the manifestation of himself, his wisdom, his power, his goodness, his mercy, and all his divine perfections, which, as I have shew'd, is that which he himself calls his glory, and which the scriptures always mean by that word. So that to do all things for himself, is the same as to do all things for his own glory. Thus he himself explains it, saying, *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise*, Isai. xliii. 21. And in the same chapter again, *I have created him for my glory*, ver. 7. And as it was for this end that he made all things, it is for this end that he governs and orders all things that he hath made. As he said to Pharaoh, *And in very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth*, Exod. ix. 16. And so in the case of Lazarus, when our Saviour heard that he was sick, he said, *This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby*,

thereby, John xi. 4. The same may be said of every thing God doth, he doth it for his own glory. Neither can we imagine for what other end he can do any thing, being infinitely happy in himself. And therefore in order to our imitating him, as we are bound, according to our capacities, we must do so too: Whatsoever we do, we must do it *to the glory of God*; and so carry on the same design in the world that God himself doth; which must needs be acknowledged to be as much our interest as it is our duty: For we shall hereby *walk, as Enoch did, with God*, in his steps, and so continue always in his favour, and under his protection.

AND besides; as God made all things else, so he made mankind in general, and us in particular, for himself. He did not make us to rake in kennels, and to scrape together the dust and dirt of the earth; to stand gaping after popular air, nor yet to sit still and do nothing: He did not make us to wallow like swine in the mire, or to gratify our flesh with brutal pleasures: He did not make us for the devil, to be his slaves and vassals; nor for this wicked world, to follow the pomps and vanities of it; neither did he make us for ourselves, to humour and please ourselves, or to seek our own honour or applause: But he made us wholly and solely for himself, to serve and glorify him. And unless we do that, we do not answer his end in making us, and so live to no purpose in the world. And whatsoever it is we do, that doth not tend to that end, will turn to no account at all; it would have been better for the world if it had never been done, and for us if we had never done it. And therefore, as ever we desire not to labour in vain, and to no purpose, or which is worse, to an ill one, *whatsoever we do, we must do it to the glory of God*.

ESPECIALLY considering, that as God made us for this end, so it is for this end that he still preserves and supports us in our being: It is for this end he gives us health, and strength, and life, and all things necessary to it: It is for this end he continues our senses and reason to us, and all the powers and faculties of our souls. It is for this end he hath revealed his will and pleasure to us, that we may know how to do it. Yea, it is for this end he redeemed us to himself with the blood of his only begotten Son: so that we are none of our own, but are *bought with a price*; and therefore, as the apostle argues, should *glorify God both in our body and in our spirit, which are his*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. And if we be wholly his, as we certainly are, then we ought to be wholly employ'd in his service. But we are capable of serving him no other way, but only by promoting his honour and glory in the world: Which therefore we are bound to endeavour in every thing we do: otherwise he will look upon us as idle and unprofitable servants, and *cast us, as such, into outer darkness*: Whereas, if we do all we can to honour him, he himself will honour us. We have his own word for it, saying, *Them that honour me I will honour*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. And *if any man serve me, saith Christ, him will my Father honour*, John xii. 26. And what can we desire more, than to be honoured by God himself? This honour have all the saints; all who, *whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, do all to the glory of God*.

WHAT now remains, but that knowing our duty, we should all resolve, by God's assistance, for the future to do it. For which purpose, in every thing we do, especially that is of weight and moment, let us remember the end for which God himself would have us do it, and do it only for that end. Whatsoever we think will tend to his glory, let us set about it with all our might: But whatsoever may cast any dishonour upon him, let us avoid and shun, altho we were sure to get the whole world by it. Every morning let us consider what we can do that day for him who gives us all we have: And at night, whether we have done it or no. Whatsoever talents God hath put into our hands, let us remember that we are but stewards, not proprietors of them; and therefore improve them only for our Master's use. In short, from this time forward, let this be the great end and design we carry on in the world, even to glorify him that sent us hither, and redeemed us to himself for that very purpose. Let us but do this, and then we may be confident that we shall live under his care and protection, and have his love and favour, his blessing and assistance attending us all our days on earth; and at length shall get to heaven, where we shall both glorify and enjoy him for ever, through his only Son: To whom, &c.

S E R M O N C I X.

All things to be done in the Name of Christ.

COL. iii. 17.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus; giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

THERE are three ways whereby we come to the knowledge of things, and are moved to act accordingly; our senses, our reason, and faith: The *first* we have, as animals; the *second*, as men; the *third*, as Christians. By our senses we perceive only gross and material objects, with their several accidents and qualities, as their colour, their smell, their taste, their sound; whether they be soft or hard, and the like: These we have in common with other animals, which are affected only with such kind of things, and with them only as they seem, every one to its proper sense, to agree or not to agree with their natural constitution and temper. By reason we can lay many such things together, reflect upon them, gather inferences from them, and improve them to our best advantage, not only as we are single persons, but likewise as we are of societies, and converse together: By it we can abstract our thoughts from matter, and exercise them upon things that have no dependence upon it, such as the truth and falshood of a metaphysical proposition, and the like: By it we can raise up our minds so far above all sensible objects, that we can contemplate upon him who made and governs them, and from thence can see how much it concerns us to do what we can to please him; and foresee, that we must one day give an account to him of all our actions, and be happy or miserable in the other world, according as we have or have not pleased him in this.

BUT this is the farthest that our reason can now carry us: for tho we know it to be our interest to please God, and to provide for our future state; yet how to do either to any purpose, we could never know but from God himself; who hath therefore reveal'd to us all that is necessary for us to know for such purposes in his holy word. And from hence ariseth the *third* way of our coming to the knowledge of things, even by faith, or a firm persuasion of the truth and certainty of what God hath revealed to us, upon that account, because he hath reveal'd it. By which means we do not only know the greatest truths that we are capable of, and such as are most necessary for us to know; but this is the most certain, or rather the only certain knowledge that we have of any thing in the world: For our senses we know are fallible, and so is our reason too. We find by experience, that they have often deceived us; but we know that God is infallible; that he can neither be deceived, nor deceive: and by consequence, what he hath said, we are sure is true, so far as we believe that he said it. But he in his holy word hath told us all that he would have us believe or do, that we may have his favour, and be happy for ever. And therefore if we believe, as we have all the reason in the

world

world to do, that the scriptures were given by the inspiration of God, and so is his word; we thereby have more certain knowledge of such things, than we can have of any thing else: Although many of them are beyond the reach of our reason, and such as we could never have thought, if they had not been there revealed: As the apostle saith, *By faith we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God*, Heb. xi. 3. Which otherwise we should never have understood.

THE same may be said of many other things, which are purely of divine revelation. By faith we understand, that God made man in his own image, but that he corrupted himself, and fell from the state in which he was made. By faith we understand there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, *the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all*. By faith we understand, that as he was delivered for our offences, so he was raised for our justification. By faith we understand, that *being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. And to name no more, by faith we understand, what is required on our parts towards our being thus reconcil'd to God, and so to our obtaining eternal life; what we must do for it, and how we must do it. This Almighty God hath clearly reveal'd to us in the holy scriptures; particularly in this chapter, where he requires us, for that end and purpose, *to seek those things that are above, to mortify the deeds of the body, to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of our mouth; and to put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, and above all things charity*: And among other things, he requires, in the verse before my text, *That the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts unto the Lord*. And then he gives us this general rule to be observ'd in all our actions, *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*.

WHERE we see it hath pleased the most high God, by his apostle, to acquaint us how he would have us speak as well as act, that we may know how to please him in word as well as deed. And to make us more careful to follow his directions herein, he hath elsewhere told us with his own mouth, *That every idle word that men should speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment: For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd*, Mat. xii. 36, 37. Which I therefore observe, because we are very apt to speak many words, and perhaps write and print them too, without considering the account that we must give to God, or the rules that he hath given to us about them; and particularly that here mention'd, whereby we are requir'd, both in word and deed, *to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*. Where our speaking also is called doing; as well it may in a large sense, our uttering words, being doing something, as well as any thing else we do.

BUT to understand this rule aright, it will be necessary to consider, what is here meant by *the name of the Lord Jesus*; and then in what sense we ought, both in word and deed, to do all in his name.

THE name of the Lord Jesus is often in our mouths; oftener, I fear, than in our hearts, we being very prone to name his name, without ever thinking of him whose name it is. Whereas, if we did but consider duly, what it is that is signified by that name, as we should never think that we could think enough of him, so we would never take his name into our mouths, but we should at the same time lift up our hearts with reverence and thankfulness unto him.

LET us therefore consider, first, who this person is, who is here called Jesus. Not a mere man; not an angel, or arch-angel, or any other creature that God hath made; but his only begotten Son, *whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtain'd a more excellent name than they*, Heb. i. 2, 3, 4. For God hath given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow; of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. From whence we may also see, wherefore the apostle in my text calls him the Lord Jesus,

every tongue is bound to confess that Jesus is the Lord; the Lord paramount over the whole creation.

BUT when was this name *Jesus* given him? It was given him before he was conceived in the womb, by no less a person than the angel *Gabriel*; who being sent from heaven on purpose, said to the blessed virgin, *Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus*, Luke i. 31. Where, we see, he commanded her to call him by that name. And that he might be sure to be call'd by that name, the angel laid the same command upon *Joseph* also, to whom the blessed virgin was espous'd, saying to him, *She shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus*, Mat. i. 21. And then acquainted them likewise with the reason, why he should be call'd by that name; even because *he shall save his people from their sins*. For the word *Jeshua*, or *Jesu*, in the original, signifies a Saviour. But lest any should think, as the *Jews* did of the *Messiah*, that he should save his people only from their temporal troubles, the angel saith, that *he shall save them from their sins*; and by consequence from all sorts of punishments due unto them for their sins, so as to make them eternally happy. And for this reason it was, that he was call'd *Jesus*, the Saviour, the only Saviour of mankind. *Neither is there salvation in any other: For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. *But he is able to save them to the utmost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. So that no man ever was, or ever can be saved by any other; but by him, any man may be saved to the utmost, that will come unto God by him.

BUT that we may better apprehend how well he deserves this great name, and what he hath done to make it good, we must farther observe, that as Almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, made all things by his Word, so he was graciously pleas'd to save fallen man also by his Word. For God the Son, or the Word, was made flesh, and dwelt among us, so as to be both God and man in one person. How this could be, is not for us to enquire; it is sufficient that God himself hath revealed it to us. Neither can it seem any greater wonder, that the Word should be made flesh, than that all things should be made by the Word of God: No greater, that God should be made in the likeness of men, than that men were made in the likeness of God. Every thing that God doth is wonderful to us, in that it is beyond our understanding and comprehension. But the greatest wonder of all is, that when he, *who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, had thus made himself of no reputation, but had taken upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, that being found in fashion as a man, he should humble himself so far as to become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, Phil. ii. 6, 7, &c. Yet, to our wonder and amazement, this did the eternal Son of God for us, and for our salvation.

FOR he having thus taken upon him the nature of man, not of this, or that particular man, but the nature of man in general, and united it to his own person; he died in it upon the cross, and so offer'd it up as a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. And by this means he became *Jesus*, our Saviour: For the death which he then suffer'd, being suffer'd by the whole nature of man in union with the divine person, was not only equivalent, but infinitely more than the death of all mankind would have been, if every man had died for his own sins. And therefore, by virtue of his said death, he can save any man from his sins, and will do so for *all that repent and believe in him*, so as to restore them to the favour of God, and bring them at last to his everlasting kingdom.

BUT for that purpose, as *he was deliver'd for our offences, he was rais'd again for our justification, went up to heaven, and is there set at the right hand of God the Father, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And he hath all things put under his feet, and is given to be head over all things to the church, which is his body*, Ephes. i. 20, &c. He is the head, not only of his body, the church, but of all things else for the sake of his said body, and all the sound members of it. All things are now entirely under his power, and at his command: And therefore nothing can impede his saving those who believe in him, but rather all things concur and work together for the effecting of it; and not only all things that God hath made, but God himself also, that made them. For his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus, being always in our nature at his right hand, he is the Mediator between God and men, continually making intercession with him, by virtue

of the sacrifice which he hath offer'd upon earth for us: By means of which his mediation and intercession for us, Almighty God is gracious and merciful to us, pardons all our sins, and gives us all things necessary both for life and godliness; blessing us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that we may partake of that inheritance which he hath purchased for us with his own blood. So that whatsoever blessing we have, whatsoever we have that is really good for us, we are beholden to the Lord Jesus for it: whose name is so great and powerful in heaven, that not only all the glorious creatures which are there continually reverence and adore him, but God the Father himself always grants whatsoever he wills; and he, be sure, always wills, that all who believe in him, may be where he is, that they may behold his glory, and be happy for ever, *John xvii. 24.*

SUCH a glorious, such a mighty Prince is the Lord Jesus: *The Prince of the kings of the earth; who hath made us also kings and priests to God, and the Father, Rev. xv. 6. The only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: By whom kings reign, and princes decree justice: Whose dominion is from one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world's end: The Word, the Wisdom, the Power of God: The Son of the Father: The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world: The Lamb that sitteth upon the throne, at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him: For he hath a name given him, that is above every name: His name only is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth: His name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace: Holy and reverend is his name: His name is Jesus; a name, which all the angels and saints in heaven honour and praise, and glorify; a name, that all the devils in hell fear and dread: as the seventy, whom the Lord Jesus sent out to preach the gospel, found by experience: For at their return they said to him, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name, Luke x. 17.* From whence it appears, that as he himself cast out devils by his word; so others did by his name, when he was upon earth.

AND what mighty works they who believed in him should do by it after his departure hence, he acquainted his apostles immediately before he left them, saying, *And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover, Mark xvi. 16, 17, 18.* And so it was. In his name St. Paul cast out the evil spirit that had possessed a damsel; he only said to the spirit, *I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her: And he came out the same hour, Acts xvi. 18.* In his name, all his disciples spake with new tongues upon the day of Pentecost, *Acts ii. 4.* In his name, St. Paul shook off the viper that fasten'd on his hand, without feeling any harm, *Acts xxviii. 5.* In his name, St. Peter healed the man that had been lame from his mother's womb; he only said, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk; and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength, Acts iii. 6, 7.* In his name the same apostle cured Æneas of the palsy; he only said, *Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole, arise, take up thy bed; and he arose immediately, Acts ix. 34.* There are many such instances of great signs and wonders done by the name of the Lord Jesus. But lest we should think that only such extraordinary things are to be done by it, the apostle in my text commands us to use it even in our ordinary conversation, saying, *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

How we may and ought to do so, is the next thing to be consider'd: And it deserves our most serious consideration; forasmuch as herein lyeth the great art and mystery of doing good, and living as becomes the disciples of the Lord Jesus. For this being expressly commanded, whatsoever we do, unless we do it in his name, we shall fail in one of the main points required to the making it a truly good and Christian act: And therefore all that desire in good earnest, *to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called,* must strive, above all things, to learn and practise this noble and divine art of doing all things in the name of him who hath called them, that what they do may be acceptable to God through him.

To put you therefore into the right way of learning this, you must first observe, that when the apostle saith, that ye must *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus;* he means only such things as are commanded, or at least allow'd of, by God in his holy word: For what he hath forbidden ought not to be done at all, much less in the name of Jesus: for that would make it a double sin, an abuse of his name as well as a breach of his law; and must be accounted for accordingly at the last day.

And how great things soever people may do in his name, unless they observe the laws of God in it, they will be never the better, but the worse for it. Hear what he himself saith, *Many, saith he, will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me, ye that work iniquity,* Mat. vii. 22, 23. Whereby he hath forewarn'd you, that how much soever ye pretend his name, and whatsoever else ye do by it, unless ye depart from iniquity, and do that which is good and righteous in it, he will never own you for his disciples, but assign you your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. The first thing therefore to be observ'd, in order to your doing all things in the name of *Jesus*, is, that you do only such things as he hath commanded: And if ye do them also therefore only, because he hath commanded them, ye may be truly said to do them in his name, in that ye do them in obedience to his command and authority.

BUT that which is chiefly required to our doing any thing in the name of the Lord *Jesus*, is a firm belief or faith in his holy name. This he himself intimates, where speaking of the great things that should be done in his name, he saith, *And these signs shall follow them that believe,* Mark xvi. 17. and so excludes all other. He hath taught us the same thing also by his apostle St. *Peter*, who having cured the lame man in the name of *Jesus Christ*, afterwards explains how it was done, saying, *And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: Yea, the faith that is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all,* Acts iii. 16. From whence it plainly appears, that it was not done by the bare naming the name of *Jesus*, but by faith in it; or rather, which is the same, *Jesus Christ* himself did it upon the apostle's believing in his name; for without which it would not have been done: as we see in those vagabond Jews, *Exorcists*, who did not believe in him, and yet took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord *Jesus*, saying, *We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth. But the evil spirit answered and said to them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?* He derided them; and was so far from going out upon their naming the name of *Jesus*, that the man, in whom the evil spirit was, leaped upon them, overcame them, and beat them; so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded, Acts xix. 13, 15, 16. Which is, doubtless, left upon record, on purpose that we may see, that notwithstanding the great power and virtue there is in the name of the Lord *Jesus*, yet nothing can be done by it, without believing in it; but that such as presume to use it without faith, shall smart severely for it.

FROM hence we may learn, how necessary it is to believe in the Lord *Jesus Christ* in order to our doing any thing that is great by his name, and by consequence any thing that is good. For to do good, is certainly as great a work in the sight of God, as any thing we can do; if not the greatest of all; not only because of the rarity of it, which makes miracles seem so great to us, but likewise by reason of the extraordinary grace of Christ, as well as power of God, that is requisite to our doing any thing that is good and well pleasing in his sight. It is indeed a great wonder, that weak and impotent men should cast out devils, cure diseases, and the like, in the name of *Jesus*: But that corrupt and sinful men should work righteousness by it, such as the most righteous Judge of the world will accept of as such, is the greatest wonder of all. Yet this we may all do in the name of the Lord *Jesus*, if we do but believe in him, and exert our faith as we ought, in what we do according to his will.

WHICH therefore that we may, we must use all possible means to strengthen our faith in him; that we may not only acknowledge, as I suppose we all do, that he is the Saviour of mankind in general, but be fully persuaded in our minds of all things revealed concerning him in his holy word; believing that he died for our sins, as certainly as we ever committed them; that he is now in heaven at the right hand of God, as certainly as that there is a sun in the firmament; and that he is always there interceding for us, as certainly as the sun ever shines upon us. For tho' we cannot see him there, as St. *Stephen* did, yet your faith, as it is the evidence of things not seen, represents him as clearly to us, as if we saw him with our eyes; and not only his being there, but his appearing now in the presence of God for us, as our Mediator and Advocate, transacting the great work of our salvation, and taking care that we may want nothing that may further it, nor have any thing that may hinder it; but that all things, which happen to us, may work together for

for the accomplishment of it; and therefore is able to save to the utmost them who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them, Heb. vii. 25. For having the word of God for this, we have infinitely more ground to believe it, than we have to believe any thing we see or hear; and accordingly ought to live with a constant sense of it upon our minds, and with a full persuasion, that the Lord Jesus, as he is God, is with us wheresoever we are upon earth; as he is man, he is always appearing in the presence of God for us in heaven; and as he is both God and man, in one person, he is our Almighty Saviour, able to order all things in heaven and earth for our salvation; can do in us and for us whatsoever may conduce to that end, and will accordingly do it, if we do but apply ourselves unto him for it.

BUT in order to our doing any thing in the name of the Lord Jesus, it is not enough that we have this faith in the habit, but we must exert or put it forth into act; actually believing and trusting on him to direct and assist us in the doing it: that we who can do no good thing without him, may be able, as St. Paul was, *to do all things thro Christ that strengthens us*, Phil. iv. 13. and particularly that which we now go about; that his grace may be sufficient for us, and his strength made perfect in our weakness: that his power may rest upon us, and carry us through the whole work. And when it is done, we must likewise actually believe in him, to make up the defects and imperfections of it with his most perfect righteousness and merits; that altho it be not so in itself, yet it may be *acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. not expecting that God should accept of it, as from us, or for any thing in itself; nor doubting but he will accept of what we do, through the mediation of his beloved Son, with whom he is well-pleased, and in whom he is pleased with what we do sincerely in his name.

BUT that we may do any thing wholly in his name, it is necessary also, that we do it to his glory: according to the rule that he hath given us by his apostle, *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. For what we do to the glory of the Lord Jesus, is done to the glory of Almighty God, the Lord Jesus being himself God Almighty. Neither can we glorify God the Father but by the Son, whom he hath sent into the world on purpose that he may be glorified in him, and *hath exalted him at his own right hand, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*, Phil. ii. 11. And therefore as what we do in his name must be done for his glory, so whatsoever is done for his glory is done to the glory of God the Father; which is the ultimate end of all his actions, and ought to be so of ours.

HE who thus doth any thing in obedience to his command, and in faith on his promises for his assistance in the doing it, and for God's acceptance of it when it is done, and makes his glory the chief end of it; such a one may be truly said to do that thing in the name of the Lord Jesus, in that it is both begun, continued, and ended in him, to whom be glory and honour for ever.

THIS will receive great light from the instances which we have in holy scripture, of such things as are more particularly commanded or affirmed to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus; as where he himself saith, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Mat. xviii. 20. Whereby he hath signified his pleasure that all our religious assemblies should be held in his name; that we should meet together as his disciples, in obedience to him our Lord and Master, to serve and worship him with reverence and godly fear, and to exercise our faith in him to enable us to perform that and all other duties acceptably to him, and to God the Father by him.

ELSEWHERE he saith, *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it*, John xiv. 14. Whereby he hath taught us, that as all our devotions, both publick and private, are to be performed in his name, so he will take care that we shall have whatsoever good thing we want, if we ask it in his name, for his sake, who hath merited all blessings for us, and by whom alone we can have any; stedfastly believing that he will intercede, that we may have it: Which therefore is expressed also by our *praying in faith, and without doubting*, James i. 6. 1 Tim. ii. 8. So for the sacraments, he ordained and commanded that baptism should be administer'd in *the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, Mat. xxviii. 19. and therefore some are said to be baptized in *the name of the Lord Jesus*, Acts xix. 5. because it was done according to his institution and command. And in the institution of his last supper, he said, *This do in remembrance of me*, Luke xxii. 19. that we may always do it in his name, and in me-

memory

mory of the death he suffer'd for us; and so exercise our faith in him all along through the whole duty.

By this apostle we are taught to give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. v. 20. And in my text, *Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.* From whence we may learn, that giving thanks to God in his name, is the same with doing it by him. It is by him only that we can go to God the Father, John xiv. 6. and it is only by him that we can receive any mercy from him; and therefore we must give thanks for all things we have, to God by him, believing and acknowledging, that it is by him only that we receive them; and then we are said to do it in his name.

To this we may add the censures of the church, which St. Paul speaking of, faith, *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (when ye are gather'd together, and my Spirit) with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ; to deliver such a one unto Satan,* &c. 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. For here we see that excommunication, or the casting a person out of the church, and so delivering him unto Satan, is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by his authority and power; which therefore is the most dreadful punishment that can be inflicted upon earth.

AGAIN, St. Peter speaking of the devil and his temptations, faith, *Whom resist steadfast in the faith,* 1 Pet. v. 9. implying, that we should resist him by faith in the Lord Jesus, and so in his name, as David went out against the giant in the name of the Lord of hosts, 1 Sam. xvii. 45.

I SHALL only give one instance more: The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, *Who-soever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward,* Mark ix. 41. where he explains what he means by giving in his name, by therefore giving it, because they belong to him, and so for his sake, out of love and respect to him: And whosoever thus gives any thing in his name, they have his word that they shall be rewarded for it.

FROM these instances we may see what it is properly to do any thing in the name of the Lord Jesus, and what kind of things ought more particularly to be done in it: And therefore the words of my text are not to be so understood as if we were bound to have respect to Christ in every little indifferent thing that we do in the common affairs of this life, but in such things as are required in order to our salvation by him, or have any relation to them; such as we call good works. But that all such must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, is plain, not only in that it is here expressly commanded, but likewise in that we can neither do any thing well, neither can any thing we do be accepted of as good in the sight of God, without believing in him for it, and so doing it in his name.

WHEREFORE, as ever we desire to do any good in the world, we must be sure to observe this rule: We must look up to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, believing and trusting on him to assist us with his grace in doing it; and then to perfume it with the incense of his own merits, that God may smell a sweet savour from it, or be well pleased with it: As when we pray to the most high God in publick or private, praise his glorious name, or celebrate the memory of the death he suffer'd for us in the sacrament of the Lord's supper; when we set ourselves to mortify any sin, or to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil; when we undertake to convince and convert infidels or hereticks, or to reprove and reform the vicious and profane; when we go about to instruct the ignorant, strengthen the weak, or comfort such as are troubled in mind, body, or estate; when we devote any part of our estates to the service of God and his church, or give any thing to the relief of the poor and indigent; when we speak, or write, or do, or suffer any thing for the defence of the gospel, and those eternal truths that are revealed in it: These, and suchlike, are great works; but that they may be good too, they must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus; otherwise, how great soever they may seem to men, they will be of little esteem with God: whereas, if we do them in his name, we shall not only be enabled by him to go through with them, but Almighty God in him will both accept and reward them.

AND indeed, this is the top of our holy religion; the highest pitch of true Christian piety and virtue, that we can arrive at in this life: Which therefore we ought to strive all we can to reach, and never leave till we have got to it; still

pressing towards this mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ our Lord: that having the said Lord Jesus always in our minds, and doing all things in his name, we may always live, not as the offspring of the first Adam, but as the members of Christ, and in him the children of the most high God, and so be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, through him; to whom be glory for ever.

S E R M O N CX.

The Meditation of God's Law, the good Man's Delight.

P S A L M i. 2.

But his Delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate (or exercise himself) Day and Night.

IN the old testament we find, that in former ages, when people had occasion and desire to know the mind of God in any difficult and doubtful case, they went to the high priest, who asking counsel for them, *after the judgment of Urim before the Lord*, Numb. xxvii. 21. the Lord was pleased to give them such responses or answers, as clearly discover'd his will in the case propounded; which were therefore called his oracles: Or else, if God had raised up ever a prophet among them, as he usually did in every age, they would go and consult him, or *enquire of the Lord* by him, Jer. xxi. 2. and the prophet, by divine inspiration, would certainly tell them what the mind of the Lord was in the business they went about. Thus God, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Heb. i. 1. It was God who spake by the prophets, and therefore whatsoever they said as such, was likewise an oracle of God. And therefore St. Paul, speaking of the advantages which the Jews had above other people, reckons this as the chief, *because unto them were committed the oracles of God*, Rom. iii. 2.

WE have no such kind of oracles to consult in these latter days, as they had; neither have we any occasion for them: For now that God hath spoken to us by his Son, and hath caused what he spake by him and his apostles, as well as what he had before spoken by the prophets, to be committed to writing, and faithfully brought down and delivered to us, we may there know the mind of God in every thing that is necessary for us to consult him about, as certainly as if we received it immediately from him by the mouth of a high priest or a prophet. For all that holy scripture being given by inspiration of God, it is all but as one continued oracle of God, wherein he hath delivered and declared his divine will and pleasure in all things that are necessary for any man to know. And whatsoever is not there

there reveal'd, we may from thence conclude, that it is not necessary for us to know it; but rather that it is the divine will that we should not be inquisitive about it. But as whatsoever is there revealed, is therefore revealed that we might know it; so whatsoever we are really concerned to know, in order to our being happy, is there revealed, so as that we may know the mind of God himself concerning it.

As for example: It highly concerns all men to know wherein true happiness consisteth, or who may be truly said to be a blessed or a happy man. This we can never know from men themselves, for they could never yet agree about it, some accounting one man happy, some another: And most esteem those only happy, who have most of the good things, as they are call'd, of this life; tho they which have them, find, by their own experience, that they are as far from being happy, as they who have them not.

WHEREFORE, our only way to be fully resolved in this case, is to consult the oracles of God who made us, and therefore best knows what will make us happy. But there we find, that he never pronounceth any man happy for any outward enjoyments. He never saith, Blessed are the rich; blessed are they that are advanced to honour and authority over their fellow-creatures; blessed are they that fare deliciously every day; blessed are they that live in ease and plenty of all things they can desire in this world: There is nothing like this in all the bible among the oracles of God, which are there recorded.

BUT what then saith the answer of God to this great question, Who is the blessed man? That we have here deliver'd, not in ambiguous terms, like the heathen oracles, but in words so plain and easy, that any one that reads them, may certainly understand the mind of God in them. For thus saith the Lord, *Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and that hath not sat in the seat of the scornful: But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law will he exercise himself, or meditate, day and night.* Where we see the blessed man described, not by what he hath or hath not in this world, but first by what he doth not, and then by what he doth: He doth not follow the counsel of ungodly men, that would entice him from his obedience to the truth, and laws of God: He doth what he can to keep out of the way that sinners walk in; and if, through surprise or inadvertency, he happens to be got into it, yet howsoever he doth not stand or continue in it: He never fits or associates himself with scorners, such as make a mock at sin, deride religion, and scorn reproof. These are the obstinate sinners, upon whom the curse of God will certainly fall; and therefore he who is blessed of God, will avoid such company and acquaintance, as he would do those which he knows to be infected with the plague.

NEITHER doth he only avoid that which is evil, but he delights in that which is good: For *his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he exercise himself day and night*; which being the positive description made by God himself of a blessed man, such as we all desire to be, it will be worth our while to treat more particularly of it, that we may fully understand his divine meaning in it. For which purpose we shall, by his assistance, consider both parts of it; how a man should delight in the law of God, and how he should exercise himself in that law day and night: And then it will be easy to shew, that he who doth so is certainly a blessed, a happy man.

FIRST therefore, by the law, or, as the original word signifies, the doctrine of the Lord, we are here to understand all that the Lord, the Almighty Creator and Governour of all things, hath taught us in his holy word. For although when this oracle was first committed to writing, there were none other extant but only the five books of *Moses*, and perhaps *Joshua* and *Judges*, yet they then contained the whole will of God; and all that were afterwards added by the prophets and apostles were only for the clearer explication of what was deliver'd before in them. And in every age, as God was pleased to make clearer and clearer revelations of himself, and his holy will to mankind, the books wherein they were contained were still added to those before written, and reckon'd part of his law: So that when the whole canon of the scriptures was completed, as it hath been now for many years, it is all that law or doctrine of the Lord, in which every wise and good man delights, and which he prefers before all the books that were ever written, and all things else that can be desired in this world; as *David* did, saying to God, *The law of thy mouth is better to me than thou-*

thousands of gold and silver, Psal. cxix. 72. *How sweet are thy words unto my taste? yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth,* ver. 103. *Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart,* ver. 111. *Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors,* ver. 24. And it is no wonder; for no man can look into the law of the Lord, or that system of divine revelations that the Lord God Almighty hath given to the world, but he will every where find something or other that will afford extraordinary delight and pleasure to him. For, first, how are all men naturally delighted in knowledge, especially in the knowledge of great and necessary truths? This is such a pleasure to the minds of men, that he who doth but think that he hath found out something which he did not know before, his imagination is tickled and pleas'd with it; as they, who give themselves to the study of natural philosophy, find by their own experience: For if they happen to light upon what they imagine to be the cause of such an effect or phenomenon in nature, they find their minds strangely affected with it; tho after all the series of secondary causes, and the dependence of one upon another, and all upon the first, is establish'd and managed with such infinite wisdom and power, as far exceeds the reach of human understandings: so that *we hardly guess aright at things that are upon earth,* Wisd. ix. 16. and all our knowledge of them at the best, is only opinion and conjecture. And yet this very conceit of our knowing them is a pleasure to us; how much more would it be so, if we were sure that our knowledge was right and perfect? But that we can never be of any knowledge but that which we receive from God himself. There is nothing in this world that we know so certainly, as that all our other knowledge is uncertain; for we have no other than what we receive from our senses or reason, or else from the testimony of other men: But we know by our own experience, that all these ways are fallible, and therefore can never be certain that we know any thing aright by them. But we know that God is infallible; what he hath said cannot but be true, just as he said it: and therefore whatsoever we know upon his word, we are sure that we know it aright. And such knowledge must needs exceed all other in pleasure and satisfaction, as much as it doth in truth and certainty.

NEITHER is the knowledge which we are taught, and so learn of God, only certain, and the only certain knowledge that we have of any thing; but it is the knowledge of the greatest and most glorious things in the world, and such as are most necessary for all men to know.

FOR by the law, or word of God, we know God himself, as far as finite creatures can know an infinite Being. By it we know that he is a spirit, without body, parts, or passions; that he, simply, is *Jehovah*, being, or essence itself; that he is of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness; that the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, these Three are One, all that one Being, *Jehovah*, the Lord; that he is every where, all the world over, the same, without any variableness, or shadow of change: This, and whatever else is either necessary or possible for us to know concerning God, is revealed to us by himself in his holy word; and he that delights not in the law of God upon this account, because he may thereby know him, it is only because he hath not yet learned to know him by it: for if he had, he could not but find himself affected with it, more than with all the pleasures of the world besides; the knowledge of God being itself the greatest good and happiness that the soul is capable of, insomuch that eternal life itself consisteth in the perfection of it.

BY the law of God we know also how the world was made, how it is still upheld in its being, and how all things in it come to be so wisely order'd as we see they are: By it we know how man was form'd, how pure and perfect he was at first made, and how he fell into the wretched estate he is now in: By it we know likewise how God was pleas'd to set up another *Adam*, or man in general, even Jesus Christ, by whom mankind might be restor'd to the same estate from which they fell in the first: that *he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,* 2 Cor. v. 21. that *as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, many are made righteous,* Rom. v. 19. That *as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,* 1 Cor. xv. 22. That *he was deliver'd for our offences, and rais'd again for our justification,* Rom. iv. 25. That *he is the only Mediator between God and men,* 1 Tim. ii. 5. And is therefore able to save to the utmost them who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make in-

tercession for them, Heb. vii. 25. These are glorious and comfortable truths indeed, which no man can hear of, and believe, but he must needs *rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. And therefore whosoever is so wise as to mind his own good and welfare, cannot but take great delight in the law of the Lord, where these, and many such great truths, are reveal'd and attested by God himself. Moreover, such a one finds great delight in the word of God, by reason of the laws or statutes which are there recorded; laws enacted by the supreme Law-giver, the infinite, wise, and gracious Governour of the world; wherein he hath discover'd his divine will and pleasure, how all mankind should demean themselves both towards him, and towards one another, while they are upon earth; and what they must do, that they may obtain eternal life in heaven: all which statutes are so wisely compos'd and fitted to the nature of man, that, as *David* observ'd, *they rejoice the heart, they enlighten the eyes*; and are therefore *more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than the honey, and the honey-comb*, Psal. xix. 8, 10.

AGAIN, all men naturally delight in history; in reading what was done in former ages: and the older a History is, the more pleasure it commonly affords, provided it appear to be a true relation of what was done in the times it treats of. But the holy scripture exceeds all other histories in antiquity, as well as in fidelity and truth. *Thucydides*, one of the most ancient of all the ancient historians, acknowledgeth, that he could find nothing clear in history before the *Peloponnesian* war, which happened about the time of *Nehemiah*: Wherefore the last history (as that is) which we have in the bible, is as old as the oldest that is extant any where else, to which any credit can be given; the profane beginning where the sacred ends: But here we have many things faithfully recorded, that were done one thousand, two thousand, three thousand years before that, yea, from the very creation of the world.

BESIDES that, the historical part of the holy scripture exceeds all other histories in the things which are there related. There we read of what Almighty God himself, and what his holy angels did by his command: There we read what punishments he inflicted upon obstinate sinners, and what care he always took of those who served him faithfully: There we read how his faithful people carried themselves in all conditions, and what they did to approve themselves to him, and to keep in his love and favour: There we read how the Son of God came into the world, what miracles he wrought, how he died, and rose again, and went up to heaven, and all to perfect our redemption: There we have also his life described, the only life that ever man lived upon earth without sin, and so the only perfect exemplar and pattern of all true piety and virtue that was ever seen among men. And if all history be a pleasure, what a pleasure is such a history as this to any sober and considering man?

To all which we may add, that no man can have any solid peace, delight, or comfort in his own mind, but what he draws from the law or word of God; forasmuch as it is there only that we find any firm ground whereupon to trust and hope for his grace and favour. For we, who are conscious to ourselves that we have so often offended the Almighty God, how can we expect any mercy at his hands? No way certainly, unless we have his own word and promise for it. But we have no such promise from him, but only in the holy scripture. But there he hath promised pardon, and grace, and all good things that can be desired, to those who repent, and believe the gospel; and hath confirm'd the same promises, as he made them in Jesus Christ. And therefore all that are sensible of their sins, and desire mercy, cannot but take great delight in God's holy word, wherein alone he hath been graciously pleas'd to promise it to them: From all which, we may conclude with the apostle, *That whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope*, Rom. xv. 4.

SEEING therefore the law of God affords so great delight to those who are exercised therein, when once a man hath tasted of it, his own inclinations will lead him to exercise himself as often as he can in it. And therefore the Psalmist here makes this the other part of the character of a blessed man; for having said, that *his delight is in the law of the Lord*, he adds, *and in his law will he exercise himself day and night*; or, as the original word usually signifies, and is therefore render'd in our last translation, *he will meditate in it*: but the sense is the same, for he

exerciseth himself in it by meditating upon it; which he therefore doth not only now and then by the by, but very frequently, or, as it is here express'd, *day and night*. This the royal prophet here asserts of every good man; and elsewhere confirms it by his own example and experience, saying, *O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day*, Plal. cxix. 97. And, *mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in thy word*, ver. 148.

BUT here it will be necessary to enquire how every good man doth, and we ought to exercise ourselves by meditating in the word of God, so as that we may reap the benefit, and enjoy the delights of it: For this is a greater art, and requires more study and application than men are commonly aware of. But we may learn the whole mystery of it from our church, which in the collect for the second Sunday in *Advent*, directs us to pray to God, *who hath caused all scriptures to be written for our learning, that we may in suchwise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of his holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ*. For what we here beseech Almighty God to give us grace to do, we must endeavour all we can ourselves to do it by the assistance of his said grace, which he hath promised to all those who ask it faithfully of him. And if we thus hear the holy scriptures, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, we shall do all that is required to the exercising our thoughts and meditations upon them, so as to receive both profit and pleasure from them.

FIRST therefore, we must hear the word of God; that is, we must hear it read, declared, or preached by a minister or officer, sent from God himself to do it. That this is the proper meaning of hearing the word, appears from the word itself, where it is said, *How can they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?* Rom. x. 14, 15. From whence it is plain, that in the sense of scripture, they only are truly said to hear the word, who hear it from such as are sent to preach it to them. If they be not sent by God, they cannot truly preach in his name; and then people may hear them as much as they please, it all signifies no more, than as if a nation, having some great affair to transact with a foreign prince, should choose one from among themselves to transact it with them, who having no commission from the said prince, as his ambassador, to do it, whatsoever he doth is void, and of no effect: Yet this is the case of many in our age, wherein that scripture is fulfilled which saith, *The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears*, 2 Tim. iv. 3. And what little good people get by such teachers, which they heap to themselves, we are taught by the same scripture, saying, *Of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*, chap. iii. 6, 7. They are ever hearing and hearing, as if they could never hear enough, and yet after all, can never come to the true knowledge of God, because they hear such only as are of their own choosing, not such as God sends to them: Whereas they who attentively hearken to the word of God, as it is deliver'd and made known to them by his own ambassadors, and accordingly receive it, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God himself; *it worketh effectually in them that believe*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. This therefore is the first thing requir'd to the exercising ourselves, and meditating aright in the law of God, even by hearing it repeated or explained to us by one of his own officers, sent by him to do it, and so receiving it as from himself.

AND as all ought thus to hear the word of God; so they who can, ought to read it too: I say they who can, for in our age there are many who cannot read; and in former ages, especially the primitive, there were few who could: and yet by their bare hearing the word read, or repeated to them, they both understood and practis'd their duty as well, if not much better, than most of them who can read do it now. And I do not doubt, but the solemn reading or declaring the will of God by his own ministers, hath always the same power and efficacy upon the attentive hearers, whether they can or cannot read it themselves: For it is not to the private reading, but to the publick reading of it, that the promises are made; from whence it comes to pass, that we commonly find ourselves more affected with hearing, suppose a chapter, once publickly read, than we are with reading the same chapter by ourselves many times over. Yet nevertheless they who can read have a great advantage over those who cannot; in that the impressions which are

made upon their minds in hearing the word, may be much confirm'd and excited in them by their reading it over again. As the *Bereans*, when they had heard the word from the apostle's mouth, and received it with all readiness of mind, they then *sought the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*, Acts xvii. 11. Their hearts were first opened to receive the word at their hearing of it; and when they afterwards read the scriptures, and found that what they had heard was the same that was there written, this confirmed them in it. Upon which, as well as upon other accounts, it is necessary that the scriptures should be translated into the vulgar tongue, that people may read them, and thereby know, whether what they hear be agreeable to what God had there revealed; otherwise they may be led blindfold they know not whither, as they are in all places where they are not permitted to read the word: at least, they can never be sure that they believe and practise according to it. But they must take heed, that they do not *wrest the scriptures to their own destruction*, as many *unlearned and unstable* people do in our age, as well as in the apostles; 2 Pet. iii. 16. And for that purpose they must read them with all reverence, meekness, and humility of mind, beseeching God to direct and assist them in it, and to *open their eyes, that they may see the wondrous things of his law*, Psal. cxix. 18.

AND whatever it is they either hear or read out of God's law, they must be sure to mark it: You must not hear so negligently, or read so cursorily and superficially, as if there was nothing worthy your notice in it; but you must mark or observe every expression, with the same care and diligence, as if you heard God himself speaking from between the cherubim, or upon the mount. For it is he that speaks all along in his holy word, which being given by his inspiration, is of that infinite extent and fulness, that how oft soever a man reads it over, he may still find something remarkable which escap'd him before. This therefore is absolutely necessary to our meditating aright in the law of God, even to mark or take special notice of what he there saith, considering whose word it is, to what end it was spoken, what use is to be made of it, and how necessary it is to be observ'd.

For which purpose, as we mark, so we must also learn the scriptures; we must learn so as to understand them, at least, as much of them as we can: which I therefore add, because there are some things in the other scriptures, as well as in St. Paul's epistles, which are *hard to be understood*, 2 Pet. iii. 16. There are some things revealed there, especially concerning Almighty God our Creator and Redeemer, which are above the reach of our finite understandings; which therefore we are not bound to understand, but only to believe, and to believe them only upon his word, who hath revealed them to us; and who therefore only revealed them, that we might believe them, tho we cannot understand them; and so build our faith wholly upon his word and testimony, to the honour of his truth and faithfulness. There are other things hard to be understood, only by reason of the weakness and corruption of our minds; which therefore are more or less understood, according as men are more or less learned in the original languages, and in such arts and sciences as may give any light to them; or else, are more or less enlighten'd by that Holy Spirit by which the scriptures were given. And therefore when we meet with any thing which we do not understand, it doth not follow but other people may understand it; and if none can, it was written only for the exercise of our faith, that we may believe it upon his word *who cannot lye*. Tit. i. 2.

BUT whatsoever things are hard to be understood in the holy scriptures, we may from thence conclude, that it is not generally necessary for all men to understand them: For whatsoever is so, is as plainly there revealed as words can do it. And therefore, without troubling ourselves about other matters (as we are too apt to do) we should apply our minds wholly to learn such things as belong to our everlasting peace, what we must believe and what we must do, that we may be saved: all which are so clearly taught in the holy scriptures, that a man of the meanest parts may learn them as well as the greatest scholar in the world. Thus therefore it is that we ought to exercise ourselves, or meditate, in the law of God, even so as to understand our whole duty to him, and to one another. He that hath learned this, hath learned enough; and whatsoever it is that a man learns, without this, will signify nothing to him; neither will it signify any thing for a man to hear, read, mark, and learn the scriptures, unless he also inwardly digest them, that is, unless he ruminate upon them, and by a strong and lively faith, fix them upon his mind,

mind, so as to turn them into proper nourishment for his soul, that he may thereby grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and accordingly be fruitful in good works; in all such good works which are the fruit of that Holy Spirit by which the scriptures were given; such as *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*, Gal. v. 22, 23. This was the great end for which the scriptures were at first written, and for which we are now to hear, and read, and meditate upon them; even that we may know the will of God, and do it; that we may live with a constant sense of what is there written upon our minds, so as firmly to believe the truths, fear the threatenings, trust on the promises, and observe the precepts which are there revealed; and particularly that wherein this very thing is commanded by God, saying, *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night; that thou may'st observe to do according to all that is written: For then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success*, Josh. i. 8. Where we see that it is God's express command, that we should every one meditate day and night in his law; that we are to meditate in it, so as to do what is there written; and that this is the way to have his blessing, prosperity, and good success: As our Lord hath taught us also with his own mouth, saying, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*, John xiii. 17. And, *Blessed are they that bear the word of God, and keep it*, Luke xi. 28. And by his royal prophet in my text, where, describing the man that is truly blessed, he saith, *That his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night*, verse 3. Wherefore, that he who doth this is blessed, we cannot doubt, seeing he who is the fountain of all blessedness, hath here pronounced him to be so. And if we had no such oracle for it, yet we could not but conclude, that he who delights in the law of the Lord must needs be a blessed man, for that very reason, because he delights in the law of the Lord: For this shews, that he is regenerate, and born again; that he is renewed, sanctified, and governed by the Holy Spirit of God, in that he delights in the law that was given by his inspiration; which he could never do, but by the same Spirit by which it was given: And therefore the apostle saith, *I delight in the law of God after the inward man*, Rom. vii. 22. After his inward man, his spiritual part, so far as he was purified and led by the Spirit of God, so far he delighted in the law of God, and no farther; and by consequence, he that really delights in the law of God is certainly led by his Spirit: But *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*, Rom. viii. 14. And *if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs of Christ*, ver. 17. and therefore as blessed as it is possible for creatures to be; all the blessings promised in the gospel being entailed upon them.

AND as delighting in the law of the Lord is a certain sign that the man is blessed, so meditating in his law day and night is the ready way to be blessed for ever: For exercising ourselves continually in meditating upon the word of God, as I have shewn we ought to do, by this means we come to true wisdom, and a right understanding of all things necessary to eternal life. *I have more understanding*, saith David, *than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation*, Psal. cxix. 99. By this means we know the *only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; which itself is eternal life*, John xvii. 3. We know him as he himself would have us know him, according to the revelations which he hath given us of himself. By this our minds are enlightened, our judgments rightly informed, our faith confirmed, our hearts cleansed, our affections kept in order, and our whole souls sanctified through the truth; for his *word is truth*, John xvii. 17. By this we are preserved from all damnable errors and heresies; we are put in mind of our whole duty both to God and man; we are quicken'd and stir'd up to the performance of it; we are armed against all temptations; we are directed which way to take in all streights and difficulties; we are protected, we are supported, we are comforted in all sorts of trouble and afflictions: In short, by thus hearing, reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting God's holy word, we embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

WHEREFORE, as ever ye desire to be blessed, so as to obtain eternal life, ye must search the scriptures, where alone ye can ever find it, John v. 39. Ye must delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate therein both day and night; not only a

little now and then by the way, but so constantly, so seriously, so effectually, that ye may believe, and love, and fear, and hope, and think, and speak, and act as ye are there taught: Then ye will be blessed indeed, and declared to be so at the last day before all the world by Christ himself, pronouncing that blessed sentence upon you, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, &c.*

S E R M O N CXI.

The Vanity of hearing the Word of God, without doing it.

J A M E S i. 22.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

AS it was by his word, that God at first created all things out of nothing, so it is by his word that he now createth us again *in Jesus Christ unto good works.* Or, as St. James here expresseth it, *He of his own will begets us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures;* ver. 18. that we should be new creatures, creatures after his own heart, such as he at first design'd us to be; such he now makes or begets us by his word: By his word, as at first spoken and written from him by his prophets and apostles, and still repeated and publish'd out of their writings, by his ministers or ambassadors sent by him for that purpose: By this it is, that he usually opens mens eyes, and turns them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. And therefore one might reasonably expect, that all that hear this word, the word of Almighty God, should all become saints, all pious and righteous persons, all living according to the word they hear. And yet we see the contrary among ourselves. There is no place upon earth, where the word of God is more commonly read and preach'd than it is in this kingdom, and particularly in this city: And yet there are but few that take care to frame their lives according to it: Few, not in themselves; for I doubt not but there are many absolutely considered, who by the blessing of God are *doers*, as well as *hearers of the word*: But they are but few, in comparison of many, who are only hearers and not doers of it. And so it was in the days of the apostles themselves. Tho St. Peter, at one short sermon, *converted three thousand souls,* Acts ii. and all the apostles preach'd the word so effectually all the world over, that many were thereby prevail'd upon, not only to profess, but to practise what they taught; yet there were others who only gave them the hearing, as appears from this caution which St. James here gives them, and which he would never have given, if there had not been some such among them; saying, *Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

A NECESSARY caution at all times, especially in our days, when many place a great part, if not the whole of their religion, in hearing; as if they served God only by hearing how to serve him, or did any good, only by hearing how to do it. And yet this is the case of too many among us, who never think they can hear too much, or do too little; which is certainly one of the greatest cheats that the devil ever put upon mankind; or rather, that men ever put upon themselves: For this is plain *deceiving their own selves*, as the apostle here assures us.

BUT that we may understand his meaning aright, we shall first consider what he here means by *the word*, what by *doing*, what by *hearing* of it; and how it comes to pass that there are many *bearers*, who are not *doers* of it: and then it will be easy to shew, that all such *deceive their own selves*.

BY *the word* therefore we are to understand that which the *apostles* preach'd, and which is now contain'd and deliver'd to us in the books of the old and new testament; wherein it hath pleas'd the most high God to speak his mind, to make known himself and his will to us; what he would have us to believe; what he would have us to do; and what he would have us not to do; which is call'd *The word*, by way of eminence, as infinitely exceeding all other words that ever were spoken by men or angels: For this is the word of Almighty God himself, *who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, and hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*, Heb. i. 1, 2. It was God himself that spake, and that spake on purpose that we might know his mind, and act accordingly; and therefore it is not more frequently than properly call'd, *His Word*. And whensoever we hear any part of it repeated to us, we are to look upon it as his word, and accordingly receive it, *not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. still apprehending the Almighty Creator of the world as speaking to us his creatures, and telling us what he would have us do.

BY *doing of the word*, we are to understand the framing both of our minds and manners according as the word directs: As we must do what the word bids, and leave undone what it forbids us to do; so we must fear the threatenings it denounceth, trust in the promises it makes, and believe the truths it reveals to us; and all for the word's sake, because we have the word of God for them. So that we must order our very thoughts and affections, as well as our words and outward actions, according to the rules which the word sets us, otherwise we cannot be properly said to be *Doers of the word*.

As for example: The word saith, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*, Mat. xxii. 37. Now they who hearing this, immediately fix their hearts and affections upon God above all things else, they are *Doers of the word*. The word saith, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them*, Mat. vii. 12. Now they who upon hearing this, accordingly always do as they would be done by, they are *Doers of the word*. The word saith, *That all who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction*, 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. Now they who out of an holy fear of this threatening word, strive all they can to know God, and to obey the Gospel, are *Doers of the word*. The word saith, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5. Wherefore they who in humble confidence of this word, can boldly say with the apostle, *The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*, ver. 6. They are *Doers of the word*. The word saith, *I and the Father are One*, John x. 30. Now they, who firmly assenting to the truth of this proposition, upon the word of him that spake it, do really believe the Father and the Son to be one Being, one God, they are *Doers of the word*. And so all that hearing any part of God's word read or declar'd to them, believe and live according to what they hear, they are *Doers of the word, and not bearers only*.

And not bearers only; as all they are who do not take care to do it, but only hear the word read or faithfully expounded to them: I say read or faithfully expounded; for ye must not think that hearing of sermons only, is hearing the word: For there may be many things in them contrary to, or at least besides the word; so that you can never be sure, that when ye hear a sermon, you hear the very word of God, any farther than you have firm ground to believe, that he who preacheth it, both rightly understands and faithfully declares the mind of God, as it is contain'd and reveal'd in his written word, which we call the *Holy Scripture*, which

which being given by inspiration of God, 2 Tim. iii. 16. is therefore properly his word, and nothing else can be truly call'd so, but as it agrees exactly with that. But when you hear any part of the holy scripture read, you are sure that you hear the very word of God; and when you hear it read in God's house, by one of his own ministers, commission'd and sent by him to read it, you then hear God's word from God himself: It is he that speaks to you by his minister, and unless you frame both your faith and lives according to what you so hear, you are *not doers of the word, but hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

BUT are there any such among us; men that hear God's word, and will not do it? I heartily wish there were not: But the case is too plain to be doubted of. Blessed be God, his word is publicly read in many places of this kingdom every day in the week, in all every Lord's day, and often expounded too; so that all may hear it if they will, and there are none but do it sometimes. And if all that are hearers, were likewise doers of the word, what a glorious kingdom, what a special people should we then be! We should then excel and out-shine all the nations upon earth besides. But alas! the word is not more commonly heard, than it is rarely done among us: Of the vast multitudes that go where it is read or preach'd, there are but few, very few, that ever *lay it to heart, so as to practise it in their lives:* Tho they hear it over and over again, it is all one, it makes no more impression upon the greatest part of those which hear it, than as if it was only an insignificant sound in the air, which they are no way concern'd in.

THIS, I confess, at first sight may seem very strange; for *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?* Amos iii. 6. Shall Almighty God himself speak, and men not mind it, nor take care to do what he saith? One would think it impossible, but that we daily see it before our eyes, and therefore cannot doubt but that it is so. The only question is, How it comes to be so: How it comes to pass, that any who are hearers, are not likewise doers of the word. For which several reasons may be given; some whereof hold good in one, some in another, and in all in some or other of them.

FIRST therefore, of those who hear the word, some do not understand it: Tho it be deliver'd in their own language, and in the plainest terms that can be invented, yet notwithstanding they are so stupid and ignorant, that they understand no more of it than as if it was spoken in an unknown tongue. And in them, as our Lord observeth, *is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them,* Mat. xiii. 14, 15. where we may likewise see the great reason why such people *do not* understand, even because they *will not.* They wilfully shut their eyes against the word, lest they should be converted by it, which they are resolved before hand not to be; and then it is no wonder that the word hath no power or effect upon them: for as it is in the parable of the sower, the word to them is as seed *sown by the way-side, which the fowls of the air pick up and devour:* that is, as our Saviour himself interprets it, *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh that wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart; this is he which receiveth seed by the way-side,* Mat. xiii. 19. It doth not fall upon him, but beside him; or at least he shifts it off from himself, by not understanding or apprehending any thing of it.

THIS is the case of too many among us, and it is a sad case indeed; for such people are incapable of receiving any benefit by the word they hear: They may hear and hear as long as they live, they can never do what they hear, for they do not know what it is, and all because they will not. They can take a great deal of pains to understand their calling, and how to manage their worldly affairs; but they will not take care to understand the word of God, nor so much as the common principles of religion. They were not instructed in them when they were young, and think scorn to be so now, but choose rather to go blindfold to hell, than to have their eyes open'd to see whither they are going. Such may be hearers of the word as much as they please; it is impossible they should ever be doers of it. God grant this may not be the case, the woful case of some here present.

AGAIN, of those who do, or at least can, understand the word they hear, if they would mind it, there are but few that mind it, or take any more notice of it, than

as if they did not, or could not understand it. Though their bodies are where the word is read or preach'd, their minds are not there, but running about upon other things; upon their houses or shops, their land or money, their creditors or debtors, their friends or their enemies, any thing but what they should be thinking of. This the prophet long ago observ'd, saying, *They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: For with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness*, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. This is the reason why they are not doers as well as hearers of the word, because while they are hearing it, their hearts are going after their covetousness, after their worldly affairs or business: And their hearts being full of other things, there is no room for the word to enter in and work upon them.

I FEAR there may be some here present, who know all this to be true by themselves: I judge no man, but appeal to every one's conscience: Since you came hither, how many places have your hearts been in? While you have been hearing God's word repeated and explain'd to you, have not many worldly or vain thoughts been crouding in together with the word, enough to stifle it? Yea, have they not stifled it altogether in many of you? Have not others of you been wholly taken up with other thoughts all the while? Are not some so still, thinking at this moment upon something besides the word you hear, and not at all of that, so as to lay it to your hearts? How then can you expect any good from it? Your hearts are shut against the word; and unless God be pleased to open them, as he did *Lydia's*, so that you may *attend to the things that are spoken*, Acts xvi. 14. all that is said, is but as water spilt upon the ground, which you can never gather up, or make any use of. And this is another great reason why of the many hearers there are so few doers of the word; even because they do not seriously attend to it, but hear it so negligently and carelessly, as if they were no way concern'd in it.

BUT although a man both understands, and likewise observes the word he hears, yet unless he believe it, he can never do it: For the word doth not work by any virtue inherent in itself, but by the special grace and power of God going along with it, and setting it home upon the hearts of those who hear it. And therefore unless a man believes what he hears to be the word of God, and accordingly receives it as such, so as to be fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of it, it can have no effect upon him: For God never exerts his power, nor manifesteth his grace in a special manner, but only to those who believe in him, and in his holy word: But to them he always doth it, as we learn from the apostle, saying, *For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. In them that believe it works effectually, but not in any other. And that is one great reason why many that hear the word, are not doers of it, even because whatsoever they may pretend, they do not really believe it; or, as the apostle words it, *The word preached doth not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it*, Heb. iv. 2. From whence we may likewise observe, that faith is so necessary an ingredient to the making the word we hear to work effectually upon us, that unless it be mixed with our hearing it, we can receive no benefit or profit at all by it, or at least not so much as to excite and enable us to do what we hear. Hence also the apostle useth this as an undeniable argument, to prove the people had not obey'd the gospel, because they had not believ'd it, saying, *But they have not all obey'd the gospel; for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?* Rom. x. 16. as taking it for granted, that as they could not believe it, but they would obey it, so they could not obey it, unless they believ'd it.

I HEARTILY wish that we had not as much cause as the prophet had, to say, *Lord, who hath believed our report?* But I fear that this also is the case of too many among us, who can be content to hear the word, and will not deny but that it is holy, and true, and just, and good; but after all they do not believe it in their hearts: They do not really believe it to be the word of the Almighty Creator of the world, that word by which he will judge them at the last day: If they did, it would make their hearts ake, when they hear it reproving them for their sins, and forewarning them of the judgment to come: It would inflame them with the true love of God, and with earnest desires to serve and honour him above all things in the world: It would put them upon constant endeavours to avoid what-

soever God forbids, and do what he commands, lest they fall under his displeasure, and so be lost and undone for ever. Whereas we see by daily experience, that men can sit and hear the word, with a great deal of seeming attention, and yet take no more care of doing any thing it requires, than as if they were no way concern'd in it; which plainly shews, that notwithstanding their profession of the Christian faith, they are not fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of it: And then it is no wonder that they are not *Doers of the word, but hearers only, deceiving their own selves.*

To which we may add, in the last place, that of those who in some measure believe what they hear whilst they are hearing it, many have no sooner heard it, but they presently forget it, and therefore can never practise it. This reason the apostle himself here suggests to us; for in the words following my text, he compares him that is only a hearer, and not a doer of the word, to a *man that having seen his face in a glass, (or mirror) straightway goes away, and forgets what manner of man he was; what dirt or spots he saw in his face, and therefore doth not wipe them off, but lets them continue just as they were before.* And then he adds, *But who so looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed,* James i. 25. where he plainly opposeth a forgetful hearer to a doer of the work, as taking it for granted, that the great reason why men do not what they hear, is, because they forget it.

THERE are many such forgetful hearers among us, such as hear much, but forget all they hear: And the reason they pretend for it, is, because their memories are so weak that they cannot retain it. But this is a groundless pretence, for they can remember other things well enough. Servants can remember what their masters bid them do; and masters can remember all they have to do in their temporal affairs: Why then cannot they remember what Almighty God requires of them, the things that belong to their everlasting peace? Not because they cannot, but because they will not remember them. If men would set themselves in good earnest to mind what they hear, they would easily remember all that is necessary for 'em to do; tho they do not remember the very words, they would keep the duty itself always in their minds, so as to put it into practice. And the reason why they do it not, is not because of the weakness of their memories, but because of the hardness of their hearts; as our Lord himself intimates in the parable of the sower, saying, *He that receiveth seed into stony places, is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it, yet he hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation, or persecution ariseth, because of the word, by and by he is offended,* Mat. xiii. 20, 21. whereby he gives us to understand, that the word of God to some hearers, is like seed sown upon a hard rock, or some stony place, where it hath no depth of earth to take root in, but lies upon the surface or top of the ground, and therefore is carried away by the next wind that blows, and so comes to nought. And then our Lord adds, *He also that receiveth seed among thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choaketh the word, and he becometh unfruitful,* ver. 22. which is another great reason why men so commonly forget all they hear, even because the things of this world croud so fast into their heads, that they stifle and choak the word, razing all the footsteps of it out of their brains, so that they remember no more of it than as if they had never heard it; as many I believe here present have found by their own experience; who having heard the word, tho they were at present affected with it, yet thinking immediately upon other things, they forget all they heard, and by consequence can never practise any of it.

It is upon some or other of these accounts, that there are so many hearers and so few doers of the word among us: It is either because, although they hear the word, they do not understand it; or although they understand it, they do not mind it; or although they mind it, yet they do not believe it; or else, although they believe it, yet they do not remember it, and therefore do not practise it. Neither is this the case only of some few weak, inconsiderate persons, but of the far greatest part of our hearers: This is a sad truth, but it is too plain to be deny'd; we see it verified in the very last duty that you were put in mind of; it was pressed upon you in as plain terms as I could invent, out of God's own word, and that too at several times; and yet I perceive but few that do it, besides those that did it before; you know what I mean: But this is not the only instance; the

same holds good in all things else. Whatsoever it is, that we read or preach, or any way publish and declare out of God's word, tho many seem mighty attentive in hearkening to it, yet when they have done that, they think they have done enough, and concern themselves no farther about it, but go away very well satisfied that they have done their duty; they have been to hear, as if that was all that is requir'd of them: But this is certainly a great cheat, a cheat that men put upon themselves, to the ruin and destruction of their own immortal souls. This I know they will scarcely believe, because it is so great a reflection upon them; but whatsoever they may think, I am sure it is true; for it is attested by God himself, saying, *Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*: But wherein do they deceive themselves? In many respects: I shall instance in only two: In that they think they do good, when really they do no good but hurt: And in that they think they get good by such hearing, when they are so far from being better, that they are really the worse for it.

FIRST, They who are not *Doers of the word, but hearers only, deceive their own selves*, in that they think by mere hearing the word of God, they do that which is good and acceptable to him, and for the honour of his name. Unless they thought so, they would never hear at all, but live altogether as without God in the world, as many heathenish people in and about this city do; to our shame be it spoken: But they who only hear, are but little better; not but that it is good and necessary for all men to hear the word of God, that so they may know his will, without which they can never do it, this being the means ordain'd of God for that purpose; but then it is only the means, not the end. It is doing that is the end of hearing; and therefore they who only hear, hear to no end or purpose at all, but cheat themselves of their time, and deceive themselves with the conceit of doing something that is well pleasing unto God; whereas indeed they do but play the hypocrites with him, making as if they had a mind to do his will, when really they have not; their design being only to hear it, not to do it; which he knowing, is so far from being pleased, that he is highly displeased with it: For this is plain mocking and affronting him to his face, and a great dishonour to him, that his creatures should come to hear his will, and he is graciously pleased to make it known to them, and yet after all they will not do it: But *be not deceived, God will not be mocked*. Tho you may deceive yourselves, you cannot deceive him: Every time you hear, he takes particular notice how ye hear, and what ye hear, and whether you act accordingly or no; and if ye do, he is graciously pleas'd to accept of it in Christ, and to bless it to you. But if you do it not, your hearing will not be reckon'd among your good but your bad works: It will add both to the number and to the weight of your sins, as you will find at the last day. And whatsoever ye may think at present, you will then clearly see how much ye deceived yourselves in thinking ye did well in hearing the word of God without doing of it.

AND if ye do none, ye may be sure that ye can get no good by such hearing. They who expect it, as men commonly do, will find themselves egregiously deceived; deceived by themselves, in flattering themselves with such vain hopes and expectations, for which they have not the least shadow of any ground or reason. For how can it possibly avail you to hear what ye must do to be saved, unless ye do it? Is a man ever the better for hearing of a good bargain or purchase, unless he makes it? Is a man ever the nearer his journey's end for knowing the way thither, unless he walks in it? Ye know he is not. How then can ye imagine, that the hearing the word of God should do you any good, unless ye do it? No, deceive not yourselves, it is impossible. The very word you hear, tells you, *Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified*, Rom. ii. 13. And a little after my text, *Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, the same not being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*, James i. 25. *This man*, and he only, that both hears the word, and doth the work, shall be blessed; and *he shall be blessed in his deed*, not in his *hearing*, but in his *doing* what he hears. He shall be blessed, but none else. To the same purpose is that of our Saviour himself, the foundation and the author of all blessings, saying, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*, John xiii. 17. Not happy are ye if ye *know* them, but if ye *do* them; implying, that although we cannot do them, unless we know them, yet we shall be never the better for knowing, unless we do them.

BUT that is not all: For *they who are hearers only, and not doers of the word*, are so far from being better, that they are much the worse for hearing it. For this is a high aggravation of their crime, in that they heard, and so knew the will of God, but yet would not do it. This is to sin against knowledge, to rebel against the light. Such are wilful, obstinate, presumptuous sinners, the worst sort of sinners in the world, and will accordingly have the worst sorts of punishments inflicted on them. If they think otherwise, they do but deceive themselves; for he who cannot lie, hath said, *Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it*, Mat. vii. 26, 27. intimating, that such shall not only fall, but their fall shall be great, greater than other mens: As he himself elsewhere explains it, saying, *That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepar'd not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes*, Luke xii. 47, 48. All that do not the will of God, shall be beaten, both they that did, and they that did not know it: But they who knew it, and yet would not do it, they shall be most beaten, their punishment shall be the greatest: If there be one place in hell hotter than another, as be sure there is, it shall be for them, even for all such as hear and know the will of God, and yet obstinately refuse to obey it. And though they will not believe it now, they shall then find to their cost the saying of St. Peter to be true, *That it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment deliver'd unto them*, 2 Pet. ii. 21. so grossly do they deceive themselves, who are hearers only, and not doers of the word.

AND yet how common is this among us? Men generally love to be deceiv'd, and rather than not be deceiv'd at all, they'll deceive themselves; and that too in things of the greatest importance, such as concern their everlasting state; as appears in many instances, but in none more plainly than in this, that they satisfy themselves with the bare hearing how to get to heaven, and so deceive themselves with the groundless conceit, as if that would bring them thither, without ever doing any thing they hear in order to it; whereas that, as we have seen, will but sink them lower into the pit of hell.

HENCE therefore I pray and beseech you all, as ye tender your own eternal welfare, that you would not put this trick or cheat any longer upon yourselves: *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only*. Whatsoever truth ye hear revealed in the word, be sure to receive it with a firm and stedfast faith; whatsoever sin ye hear reprov'd, be sure to forsake and avoid it; whatsoever duty ye hear commanded by Almighty God, be sure to live in the constant performance of it: that so ye may grow wiser and better by every chapter ye hear read, and by every sermon that is preach'd to you out of God's holy word. For which purpose I would advise you to observe and follow these few directions.

WHENSOEVER you go into the house of God, there, among other things, to hear his most holy word, consider whose word you go to hear; not the word of a mortal man, nor the word of an angel or arch-angel, but the word of your Almighty Creator, and most merciful Redeemer, the supreme Law-giver and Judge of the whole world, that word by which he will judge you at the last day. And therefore humbly beseech him, as David did, to *open your eyes that you may behold the wondrous things of his law*, Psalm cxix. 18. and likewise to open your hearts too, that ye may receive the truth in the love of it.

HAVING thus prepar'd yourselves for it, while the word is delivering to you, set yourselves in good earnest to hearken diligently to it; striving all ye can to apprehend the meaning of every sentence and expression in it. And if any thing be above your reach, as some of the articles of our religion are, howsoever consider from whom it comes, it comes from God, and accordingly believe it upon his word, without searching any farther into it.

BUT when you hear of any plain truth that God is pleas'd to reveal to you, of any sin that he forbids you, of any duty that he requires of you, of any punishment that he threatens, or of any blessing that he promiteth to his people; be sure to mind it, and set it home upon your hearts and consciences; applying it every one to himself, as much as if it was spoken particularly to him, and to no body else,
and

and resolving with himself to act accordingly. Do not look upon any thing, as meant only of other people, as some are apt to do; but every one should look upon every thing as directed immediately to himself: For without such a particular application of what ye hear, to yourselves, ye can never be truly touch'd or affected with it, so as to receive any real benefit or comfort from it.

NEITHER must you only thus take every one what he hears to himself, but you must take it as from God, you must receive it *not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. and therefore you must receive it with such a faith as is due to God's own word, which being the firmest ground we can have, whercupon to build our faith, it requires the strongest faith that can be built upon it: And accordingly, whatsoever it is that you hear out of his word, you must not doubt, but be fully persuaded in your minds, that it is both infallibly true, and absolutely necessary for you to know and do, otherwise he would not have told you of it.

WHEN ye have thus, by a quick and lively faith, received the word into your hearts, be sure to keep it there. Do not suffer any vain thoughts, idle discourse, or worldly business, to juggle it out again; but still continue to exercise your faith upon it; and that, by the grace of God co-operating with his word, will certainly put you upon doing of the work.

WHEREFORE, in short, as ever ye desire never to hear the word in vain, whenever ye go to hear it, carefully observe the apostle's direction, in the words before my text, *Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*. Receive it so by faith, that it may be engrafted in your hearts, and so bring forth fruit unto salvation. For which purpose, always carry what ye have now heard in your minds; *Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*. That the word you have now heard may, by the blessing of God, be the means of your doing whatsoever else ye shall hereafter hear: By which means this one sermon will make all others profitable to you, and effectual to the saving of your souls. And so our preaching will never be in vain, nor your hearing in vain: For being both hearers and doers of the word, you will go from strength to strength, and every day grow more and more in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: To whom be glory for ever.



S E R M O N CXII.

The Duty and Advantage of seeking Things spiritual.

M A T. vi. 33.

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and
all these things shall be added unto you.*

ALTHO we are only strangers and pilgrims in this world, and know not how soon, but are certain that ere long we shall be taken out of it; yet we are very apt to be as thoughtful and solicitous about the little affairs and concerns of it, as if we were to live in it for ever: *Informuch that seeing we cannot live here at all without eating and drinking, nor conveniently without clothing, we commonly mind little else, but either to feed or clothe ourselves, or else to provide wherewithal to do it. Neither is this the sin and folly only of the place and age we live in. It was so among God's own peculiar people, when his only begotten Son vouchsafed to converse with them in our nature. He could not but take notice that they also, as well as other people, were exceedingly addicted to it; and therefore, in this chapter, useth the most clear and proper motives that could be thought of, to dissuade them and us from it. First, saith he, No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on,* ver. 24, 25. As if he should have said, Ye profess to serve God, but that ye cannot do, so long as you serve this world: *For no man can serve two masters. For he that hath two masters, will either hate the one, and love the other; or if he doth not do that, he'll hold to the one, so as to do his work, and despise the other, so as not to do what he requires. This is a general rule that holds good in all cases, especially in this of serving God and Mammon; no man can possibly serve two masters that are so contrary to one another as they are. He whose mind is bent upon serving God, must needs despise and contemn this world; and he whose thoughts are distracted about the things of this world, it is impossible that his heart should be united in serving God. And therefore, as ever ye desire to serve God, as you profess to do, I say unto you, I advise and counsel you, Do not distract and perplex your minds with taking care and thoughtfulness about this life, what ye shall eat, or drink, or wear: For, consider likewise, is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? And therefore God, who doth the greater, cannot he do the less? He that gives you life, cannot he give you meat to preserve it? He that made the body, cannot he provide raiment for it to clothe it, without your being so anxious and solicitous about it, as to neglect his service for it?*

BEHOLD also the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ver. 26. Tho the fowls of the air, as all other creatures, are good in their kind; yet are not you, who were made in the likeness of God himself, much better? And yet you see that he feeds them. How then can ye doubt but he'll take care of

you, without your being so overcareful for yourselves? And besides, consider how vain and foolish all such anxious care and thoughtfulness is; for, *which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?* ver. 27. Which of you, by all your cunning and artifice, can make their bodies higher, or their lives one minute longer than God hath determin'd they should be? *And why take ye thought for raiment?* Consider *the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not array'd like one of these,* ver. 28, 29. *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is so fresh and flourishing, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?* ver. 30. Is not this a great instance of your infidelity, or at least of the weakness of your faith, that you should mistrust God's providence and care to provide sufficient clothing for you, notwithstanding that you see him make such plentiful provision of it for the very flowers of the field, that the royal apparel of the wisest and greatest of kings, even of Solomon himself, could not shine so gloriously as they do? *Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek,* ver. 31, 32. The *heathens*, who do not know God, nor believe his providence, they indeed are solicitous about these things: But will you be like them? No surely; especially considering, that *your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of such things.* You have a Father in heaven, who knows that you cannot live without these things, and therefore you may be confident that he will provide them for you, without your distracting and perplexing yourselves with anxious care and solicitude about them. But instead of that, I'll direct you to an infallible way, how you may be sure never to want any of these things which are necessary for you; which, in short, is this, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then (ye have my word for it) all these things shall be added to you.*

WHERE we may observe two things: First, the method prescrib'd by our Lord for that purpose, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness:* And then, the certainty of that method, *And all these things shall be added to you.*

THE first thing to be here consider'd, is, the method which our Lord prescribes, whereby to have all things necessary for this life bestow'd upon us, without our being too careful and anxious about them: I say, without our being too careful and anxious: for so the word *μεριμνᾶτε* here used properly signifies. So that our Lord doth not here forbid what we are elsewhere commanded, even to have a sober, prudent, and moderate care even of the things of this world, so as to be diligent in your respective callings, and by that means to provide necessities both for yourselves and families; for he that doth not do that, *hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;* as St. Paul himself, who perfectly understood our Lord's meaning, saith, *1 Tim. v. 8.* But that which our great Master here requires of us and all his disciples or scholars, is, That our thoughts be not so taken up about the things of this world, as to be taken off from serving God, or distracted in the performance of it: As appears from the reasons which he himself here gives, why he would not have us so thoughtful about the world, even because we *cannot serve God and Mammon,* ver. 24. For from hence it is manifest, that he forbids only such excessive and immoderate care and thoughtfulness about the things of this world, as impedes and disturbs us in our serving God. But such a moderate care and providence for the necessities of this present life, as is consistent with, or any way subservient to the great end of living here, even to our serving and honouring him in whom we live, that certainly is not only lawful, but our duty; and our Saviour is so far from forbidding that, that he rather commands it, in that he commands us to serve God, which we cannot do without such things as are necessary to our present subsistence; which we have no ground to expect, without using the means which God hath appointed for that end, by being diligent and industrious in the calling, which he, for that purpose, hath placed us in. But even in this also, our Master hath here taught us how to carry ourselves, even to do our duty, to mind every one his own business, and not to trouble or torment our selves with what may, or what may not be the issue of it; but to leave that to God, and trust on him for his blessing upon our endeavours, to make them successful and effectual to all things necessary both for life and godliness. And indeed it is only a diffident and mistrustful care for the things of this life, which our Saviour here forbids; when men mind their calling, and yet fear they shall want, not believing or trusting in God for his blessing on what they do, but either thinking to provide

necessaries for themselves without him, or else, fearing that he, notwithstanding their endeavours, will not provide them for them: *Wherefore, saith he, if God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?* ver. 30. whereby he plainly shews, that the care which he there condemns, is that which is accompany'd with the want or weakness of our faith in God; when notwithstanding all the promises that he hath made us, and all the blessings he hath already bestow'd upon us, we will not believe him, nor trust him for the future, but still are full of fears and jealousies of what may befall us hereafter, and whether we may not one time or other want even necessary food and raiment. This is that sinful care and thoughtfulness about the things of this life, which our Saviour here forbids: and that his disciples may never be guilty of it, he directs them to a most certain way how to be sure of all things necessary, without their being so anxious and solicitous about them, even by *seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness* in the first place.

Now we being all in the number of his disciples, cannot but look upon our selves as obliged to learn and practise whatsoever he, our great Lord and Master, hath taught us, especially in a matter which doth so nearly concern us as this doth: For I dare say, we all desire to take the best course we can, whereby to secure to ourselves a sufficient maintenance, whilst we are in this world, so as to be sure never to want food, or raiment, or any thing that we shall have a real occasion for: and this is that which our blessed Saviour here directs us to; inasmuch that if we do but rightly understand his meaning in these words, and act accordingly, we may be confident that we shall never want any thing that is good for us.

For this purpose therefore we shall take the words apart, and consider what our Lord means by *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, what by *seeking*, and what by *seeking of it*, in the first place; for then we shall easily apprehend what he would have us do, when he saith, *But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*.

FIRST therefore, by the kingdom of God, our Lord here means that kingdom of his, which he himself saith is *not of this world*, John xviii. 36. that invisible and spiritual kingdom which he erects in the hearts of men, and governs by the sweet influences of his Holy Spirit, leading them into all truth, and goodness, and virtue; to every thing that is acceptable to God, and for the advancement of his honour and glory. This is that kingdom of God, which Christ himself saith is *within us*, Luke xvii. 21. and that which his apostle speaks of, where he saith, that *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17.

Now this kingdom of God, altho it be not of this world, it is begun in it, being first set up in the souls of men whilst they are united to their bodies, where it meets with much opposition; *The flesh*, as the apostle speaks, *lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other*, Gal. v. 17. By which means it comes to pass, that this kingdom is always embroiled with spiritual wars and tumults, so long as it is in this world; and altho it doth not only keep its ground, but get the victory too even in this, yet it triumphs only in the other world, where all its enemies being perfectly subdued, it enjoys perpetual tranquillity and peace. And there it is, that all the subjects of this kingdom are advanced to the highest degrees of honour and happiness that creatures can be invested with; being all crowned with glory and immortality, and transported continually with the rays of divine light shining upon them, and filling them with all the joy and comfort that their nature is capable of; and that too not only for some years or ages, but for ever and ever: for *of this kingdom there shall be no end*, Luke i. 33.

THIS is that kingdom of God, which his only begotten Son hath purchased for mankind with his own blood, and which he would have us therefore to look after before all things else, saying, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God*; and that we may the better understand both the nature of this kingdom, and the way to it, he adds, *and his righteousness*, implying, that this kingdom of God is composed altogether, and made up of righteousness. The crown of it is a crown of righteousness, the scepter is a scepter of righteousness, and its whole form and constitution is founded and established in the righteousness of God; so that none can seek so as to obtain this kingdom of God, but he must at the same time seek his righteousness

righteousness too, without which it is impossible for any man to be admitted into, or to enjoy the privileges and immunities of this kingdom.

WHERE by righteousness we are to understand, as the word generally signifies, that habit or disposition of the mind, whereby we are always ready and willing to perform our whole duty both to God and man, and so to give what we owe to each of them: For tho the word in its strict sense be sometimes restrained to our dealings with one another; yet in its general and enlarged notion, wherein it is here to be understood, it hath respect also unto God, to whom we are more indebted, and therefore owe more than we do, or can do, to men: For we are indebted to him for every thing we have, yea for every thing we are, for our very souls and bodies, and therefore should glorify him in both. Inasmuch that to our being just and righteous towards God, it is necessary that we apprehend and esteem him as our chiefest good; that we desire and love him with all our hearts, serve and honour him with all our might; that we praise and thank him for whatsoever we have, and pray to him, and him alone, for what we want; that we believe his word, fear his threatenings, trust on his promises, and observe his precepts to the utmost of our power; that we adore and worship him with reverence and godly fear, and do all we can to promote his honour and glory in the world: In short, he that would render unto God his whole due, must give up all he is to him, lay out all he hath for him, and make it his constant care and study to please, obey, and glorify him in every thing he thinks, or speaks, or doth.

For this we owe to God, and therefore ought in justice or righteousness to pay it, as well as what we owe to men; concerning whom God himself commands us to render unto all their due, *Tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*, Rom. xiii. 7. That we render to Cesar the things which are Cesar's, as well as to God the things that are God's, Mat. xxii. 21. That we speak evil of no man, but love and honour all: That we do not deceive, or cheat, or defraud one another in any matter, but in all our dealings observe that golden rule, which our great Master hath set us, saying, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets*, Mat. vii. 12. That is, this is the sum and substance of whatsoever is requir'd of us, either in the law or prophets, as to our carriage and behaviour one to another.

HE who thus exerciseth himself as St. Paul did, *to have always a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men*, by performing whatsoever he knows to be his duty to both; such a one may truly and properly be call'd a just or righteous man. And this is that righteousness which our blessed Saviour here speaks of, and calls *the righteousness of God*; not but that it may in some sense be termed also our righteousness, as being wrought both in us and by us; in us as the subjects, by us as the instruments, and in some measure the co-operative causes of it. But yet it is most properly here called the righteousness of God, because it is of his commanding, of his infusing, and of his accepting.

FIRST, It is of his commanding: It is that which the most high God doth expressly require of us, both in his law and prophets, wherein he hath revealed his will and pleasure to us; what he would have us to do, and what not to do, both as to himself and to one another. And he who therefore doth what God commands because he commands it, and avoids what he forbids because he forbids it; such a man is properly righteous towards God, and such righteousness may be truly call'd the righteousness of God, as being commanded by him, and perform'd only in obedience to that command.

AND as it is God who requires this righteousness of us, so it is he also who infuseth it into us, and gives us both grace and power to do it; or, as the apostle words it, *It is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*; Phil. ii. 13. That is, he both inclines our wills to do what he commands, and assisteth us also in the doing of it: For we are assured, not only from scripture, but likewise from our own experience, that *we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. And if we cannot so much as think, much less can we do any thing that is truly good, without God, who, as he is the chiefest good in himself, so is he the fountain of all the goodness that is in any of his creatures, and particularly in mankind; it all flows from him, and is derived to them by his Son our Saviour and Mediator Jesus Christ, who therefore tells us, that

without him we can do nothing, John xv. 5. that is, we can do nothing that is truly good without him: but by him there is nothing that is truly good but we may do it; as St. Paul found by experience, when he said, *I can do all things through Christ, that strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. implying, that notwithstanding his natural weakness and inability to please and obey God, or to work righteousness by his own strength, yet he was able to do it by that grace and assistance which he received from God himself, by means of Christ's merits and intercession for him. And so it is that we must do good, if ever we do any at all; it must be by the power of God, enlightening our minds, influencing our wills, directing our intentions, strengthening our resolutions, co-operating all along with us, and so enabling us effectually to do it. Hence it is, that in the collect which our church hath appointed for the first Sunday after Epiphany, we pray to God, that *he would grant that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Wherefore seeing all the righteousness that we either have or do, proceeds from God, and is both begun, continued, and perfected by him, it may most properly be call'd, as it really is, the righteousness of God.

AND so it may be also because it is of his accepting, when it is done: For as it is done by us, it is so imperfect, that it doth not deserve the name of righteousness. It is true, God gives us sufficient power to do it: But we, by reason of our natural weakness and infirmities, do not so use that power, as to adjust what we do, exactly to the rule that God hath set us: but every deviation from that rule is sin or unrighteousness; and therefore in the most exact righteousness that we perform, there is so much sin and unrighteousness mixt with it, that God may justly disown and reject it, and not accept of it as any righteousness at all: but nevertheless God is pleas'd to accept of it as well as if it was perfect, upon the account of that absolutely perfect righteousness and obedience which his Son performed to him in our nature; in whom we are therefore said to be made the righteousness of God, 2 Cor. v. 21. that is, both we and our righteousness are accepted of before God. Hence the apostle calls it, *The righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9. because it is by our believing in Christ, that his righteousness is made ours, and ours is made acceptable to God by it: So that to speak properly, whatsoever righteousness we have or do, is more truly God's righteousness than ours; forasmuch as it is no farther true righteousness, than as the righteousness of Christ is superadded to it, and God is pleas'd to accept of it as such for his sake. And this I look upon as the great reason why our Saviour here calls it, *The righteousness of God*; and why he would have us to seek it, together with the kingdom of God; because it is proper and peculiar to that kingdom, and can never be separated from it, nor any where attained but only in it: So that he who seeks the kingdom of God without his righteousness, or his righteousness without his kingdom, is sure to lose his labour, for he can never find either; whereas, if we seek them both together, we shall likewise obtain them both together: For at the same time that we are admitted into the kingdom of God, we shall also be invested with his righteousness, and so made fit subjects for such a kingdom as that is. But then you'll say, What doth our Lord mean by seeking of this kingdom of God and his righteousness? And how would he have us seek it, so as to be sure to find it? For that we must know in general, that there are several things requir'd as necessary to dispose and prepare us for the seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness. It is necessary that we believe or know there is such a kingdom, and such righteousness to be had; that it is worth our while to look after it; and that if we do look after it as we ought, we may certainly have it: But these things, I suppose, you are all fully satisfied in, and therefore do earnestly desire to attain this kingdom and righteousness, and are so stedfastly resolved to do all ye can for it. And verily such a resolution is the first step towards it; and if rightly pursued, will bring you to it: Whereas, unless you be resolved to seek it in good earnest, it will be in vain to tell you how to do it. But howsoever, whether you be resolv'd upon it or no, I must explain my Master's meaning to you, and shew what it is that he would have you to do, when he commands you to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and that too in the first place, or before all other things.

FIRST therefore, when our blessed Saviour commands you to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, his will and pleasure in short is this, that you constantly

and sincerely make use of all means, such as he hath prescribed, whereby to obtain and practise true grace and virtue, that you may become such persons as God will accept of as righteous, and therefore admit into his kingdom, thro Jesus Christ. For which purpose, it is necessary that you consult and study the word of God, wherein he hath revealed his will to you, and told you what he would have you to believe, and think, and speak, and do, that ye may be saved. Hence, as our Saviour here commands you to *seek the kingdom of God*, he elsewhere commands you to *search the scriptures*, John v. 39. because they direct you into the way that leads to that kingdom, and shew you likewise how to walk in it. It is by them also that ye may know how to work righteousness, and how to make it the righteousness of God, acceptable and well pleasing unto him; which unless you know, it is impossible for you to do. But then on the other side too, unless you do it, it is in vain to know it: and therefore when by reading or hearing God's holy word read or expounded to you, you are acquainted with his divine will, you must endeavour all you can to observe and obey it, and to order your whole lives and conversations according to it.

BUT seeing you cannot do it by your own strength, you must make it your daily prayer to Almighty God, that he, for his Son's sake, would assist you with his grace and Holy Spirit in the doing of it: but you must be sure to ask in faith, nothing doubting, but firmly believing our Saviour's words; where he saith, *If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Luke xi. 13. that is, to them that earnestly desire, and faithfully pray to him for such a measure of his Holy Spirit, whereby they may be sanctified throughout, and made really and truly holy, so as to serve and honour him with a perfect heart and a willing mind. They who thus pray to God, and trust in the promises which he hath made us to that purpose, in Jesus Christ, cannot fail of what they so pray for; especially, if they constantly make this the great subject of their private, as it is of our publick devotions, wherein we daily implore his divine Majesty to give us repentance, and his Holy Spirit, that what we do may always please him, and that our lives may be pure and holy in his sight. But when we pray for so great a blessing as this is, either in publick or in private, we must be sure to do it heartily, sincerely, and with that earnestness of desire that is suitable to the greatness of the blessing we desire, which is indeed the greatest we can ever have.

WHEREFORE, as you tender your own spiritual and eternal good, I advise and beseech you all to make conscience of frequenting the prayers of our church, and to be as serious and intent in them, as ye possibly can; and not only in praying, but likewise in praising God for all the expressions of his undeserved love and goodness already vouchsafed to you, as remembering that thankfulness to God for the blessings we enjoy, is a sure means whereby to obtain those we want. But to make both your prayers and praises more acceptable to God, and beneficial to yourselves, it is requisite that you often join fasting with them, that so your bodies being kept under, your souls may exercise themselves more freely in such high and heavenly employments as those are; especially when ye pray, as ye ought always to do, for the illuminations and assistances of God's Holy Spirit. For as our Saviour saith there is some kind of wicked spirits that will not go out without prayer and fasting; so there are some persons into whom God's Holy Spirit will not come, without fasting as well as praying for him: because without that, their bodies being full of corrupt and sinful humours, they will not be fit temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; which St. Paul was so sensible of, that he always kept his body under, and *brought it into subjection, lest that by any means, when he had preach'd unto others, he himself should be a cast-away*, 1 Cor. ix. 27.

THERE is one thing still behind that is of very great use in order to our partaking of the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit, and by consequence of his kingdom and righteousness, and that is the sacrament of our Lord's supper, ordained on purpose to put us in mind of, and so to exercise our faith in him, who with his own blood purchased the power and right of bestowing the Spirit upon us, and therefore is always willing and ready to do it. And though I do not deny but that he often doth it in other duties as well as this; yet I dare positively affirm, that the frequent and worthy receiving of Christ's mystical body and blood, is the most effectual means that we can ever use whereby to receive his Holy Spirit too: that being so spiritual and divine a duty, that it raiseth up our spirits, as I may so speak,

to meet it, or at least qualifies or disposeth our minds so rarely for it, that unless we fail in receiving that holy sacrament, we cannot certainly fail of receiving the Holy Spirit also, at least such a measure of it as is necessary for us in our present circumstances. These are, in short, those means of grace which God hath prescribed for our obtaining his kingdom and righteousness: And if we desire the end, we must use these means, not only by the by, and when we have nothing else to do, but diligently, industriously, constantly, believingly, trusting on God for his blessing upon them. Thus it is that Christ would have us *seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*. But then we must observe withal, that he would have us seek it in the first place; *But seek ye first*, saith he, *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, that is, seek it before all things else, not only before riches, and honours, and pleasures, the impertinences and superfluities of this life, but before those things which are necessary to this life, yea, and before that life itself to which they are necessary.

WHEREFORE all such among you as desire punctually to observe what our great Lord and Master doth here command, must make it your first and great care and study, whilst you are in this world, to be wise, and holy, and good, and righteous, such as the gospel requires and obligeth all to be; and for that purpose you must sincerely and constantly use those means which are appointed for that end. You must not only read or hear the scriptures now and then, but you must really prefer them before all other writings in the world, and so *mark, learn, and inwardly digest them*, that you may understand how to serve and please God better than any other art or science whatsoever. Neither must you pray only sometimes, but it must be your daily employment, yea, the first and last thing you do every day. And living in a place where you have the opportunity of performing your publick as well as private devotions every day, you must prize it before all temporal blessings, and not suffer every little worldly business to keep you from them. And seeing it is requisite that you often join fasting with your prayers, you must not look upon it as a severe task impos'd upon you, but make it your pleasure and delight, so as to esteem a day spent in fasting and prayer beyond the greatest feasts you can be at. And as for the Lord's supper, that is so heavenly, so divine a banquet, that you must always hunger and thirst after it, and bless God that you are so frequently invited to it, that you may feed upon the bread of life, and derive grace and strength from Christ, to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*: which you ought to account, as really it is, the greatest happiness you can enjoy on this side heaven; and by consequence neglect no opportunity of partaking of it: at least, never let the trifling concerns of this world deprive you of the comfort and advantage you may receive by it, which is so great, so exceeding great, that I am confident, were you once accustomed to the frequent and worthy receiving of that holy sacrament, you would think it as impossible to receive it too frequently, as it is to receive it too worthily.

ALL such among you as really and sincerely desire to *seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness* in the first place, must, in the first also use these and the like means which tend to that end, so as to prefer them both in your judgment and practice before those which tend only to the advancement of your estates and reputation in the world: otherwise you cannot be said to do what our Saviour here requires of you. And he be sure would never have requir'd this of you, if you could have been saved without it: For he having purchas'd the kingdom of God for you at no less a price than with his own blood, you may be confident that he requires no more on your parts, than what is absolutely necessary in order to your obtaining of it. And therefore he having commanded you to seek it in the first place, unless you do so, you have no ground to expect ever to have it.

BUT although Christ's command is a sufficient ground of your duty, and we are therefore bound to do what he commands us, because he commands us to do it, whether we understand the reason of it or no; yet howsoever, that you may see what great reason he had to command, and you have to obey him in it, I desire you to consider,

FIRST, That the best things are always to be sought in the first place. This you cannot but all acknowledge to be the general rule for all rational creatures to walk by, and which you yourselves pretend to observe in all the actions of your life; for if two things be offer'd to you, the one better and the other worse,

you would account it a great piece of folly and madness to choose the worse before the better: I dare say you would not do it in your common conversation, and trafficking with one another about the things of this world; but what you apprehend or believe to be the best, that you'll choose and desire first. And so all must do, that would carry themselves like rational as well as free agents.

Now do but apply this certain and plain rule to the matter in hand, and you'll easily see the reasonableness of this command: For you cannot but all acknowledge, that the kingdom of God and his righteousness is really better than all things of this life, yea, the best thing that you can ever have. Should I ask you one by one, whether you do not think so, I dare say you could not deny it, but would rather be angry at my making any question: What, would you say, do you think us such fools and madmen, as not to believe and know the kingdom of God is better than all the kingdoms of this world, and his righteousness than all the riches in it? This is to question whether we be Christians, yea, whether we be men or no. For reason as well as religion teacheth us that he who made all things, must needs be better than all things he made; and by consequence that his love and favour must needs be the best thing, the greatest good that we can ever have. But do ye really believe this? Then, if ye do but consult your own natural reason, that will teach you, that you ought to seek it in the first place, and that unless you do so, your practice will contradict both your faith and reason, and so you will live rather like beasts than either Christians or men.

ESPECIALLY, if to this you add, that the kingdom of God and his righteousness is not only better, but so infinitely better than the things of this life, that in comparison of that, they can scarcely be said to be good at all. And therefore the same reason that obligeth you to seek that before them, obligeth you also to seek it so far before them, as not to seek them at all in comparison of it. From whence you may clearly see the great reasonableness of that command which our Saviour here lays upon you.

WHICH will farther appear also, if you consider withal, that as the kingdom of God is the best thing in the world that you can ever seek, so it is the hardest matter in the world ever to obtain it: For he that hath open'd the gate, and made way for you to go thither, hath told you in plain terms, that *the gate is strait, and the way narrow that leads to it*, and that there be but *few that find it*, Mat. vii. 14. And seeing there is so much time and pains required to the getting of it, it is no wonder that he here adviseth you to seek it first. As for your time, that, as you all know, at the longest is but short, and at the best but very uncertain; insomuch that unless ye begin to seek it now, before all other things, you cannot promise yourselves any time at all to do it in, or at the most not enough. And as for the care and pains you must take for so great a good, when you once set about it in good earnest, you will find that all you can do will be little enough for it; and therefore you had need lay out yourselves wholly in the pursuit of it, more than for all things else, otherwise you had as good never pursue it at all, for you are never likely to attain it. Wherefore, as ever ye desire to *seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness* at all, you must be sure to seek it, as our Lord here commands, in the first place, or before all things else, lest otherwise you seek it to no purpose, even so as never to find it.

BUT how difficult soever this work be, it is the most necessary work we have to do in this world, and therefore must needs be done first. It is the great work that we were made for: We were not made to scrape up dirt, nor to gape after popular air, nor yet to gratify our flesh with sensual pleasures; but we were made to serve and honour him that made us, by seeking his kingdom and glory: and therefore except we do that, we spend our time in vain, and live to no purpose at all, but do as much as in us lies to frustrate the very end of our creation. And there is all the reason in the world, that we should do that first, which is so absolutely necessary to be done, that without that, whatsoever else we do will signify nothing, but we had as good sit still and be idle all the days of our life, and so go out of the world without ever having done any good in it. Neither is it necessary only to our accomplishing God's end in making us, but it is necessary also to our attainment of true happiness, which the things of this world are not: For true happiness being seated only in the mind, nothing that is without us can contribute any thing towards it. But a man may be as happy

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without wealth, or honour, or health, or liberty, or life itself, as he can be with it. Nay, it is much to be observed, that the things of this world are so far from being able to make us happy, that we can never be perfectly happy so long as we have them; but we must of necessity leave not only all things in this world, but this very world itself, and go into the other, before we can have true and perfect happiness: whereas on the other side, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, are so necessary, so indispensibly necessary to our being happy, that it is as impossible for us to be happy without them, as it is to be miserable with them. For all true happiness consisteth only in the enjoyment of God, the supreme and only good: But we can never enjoy God any where but in his own kingdom; nor there, except we be first made righteous, and so, according to our capacity, like unto him. And therefore, as ever we desire to be truly, and really, and eternally happy, we must of necessity seek God's kingdom and righteousness, which our Saviour himself elsewhere calls, *The one thing needful*, Luke x. 42. And therefore it is no wonder that he here commands us to seek it first; all other things, in comparison of that, being superfluous and unnecessary.

It is true, whilst we are in the body, there are some things necessary to our being in it, tho not our being happy; as meat, and drink, and clothing, which are the ordinary means whereby these houses of clay wherein we dwell, are supported and defended from wind and weather. But tho there may be some necessity of our having such things, there is none at all for our seeking of them with care and anxiety of mind: for we may have them without that, far better than with it; as appears from the promise which our Lord here makes to those who *first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, *That all these things shall be added to them*: Which also suggests to us another great reason why we ought to seek the kingdom of God in the first place; because if we do that, all things else that are any way needful for us, shall be added to us.

AND all these things shall be added to you; that is, if you first seek God's kingdom, you shall not only find that, but all things that are needful for you while you are upon earth, *προςεθήσονται*, shall be added to you over and above what you first sought: they shall be given you, as the word intimates, like paper and packthread into the bargain. Concerning which promise there are two things much to be observed; first, the certainty, and then the extent of it.

THE certainty of this promise appears from the power and faithfulness of him that made it, even Christ himself; who being of infinite power, can do what he will; and being of infinite truth and faithfulness, will do all he can for the fulfilling of it. And therefore he having passed his word, and made this promise to us with his own mouth, we ought not, we cannot doubt but he will most certainly make it good; *For heaven and earth shall pass away, but, as he himself saith, his words shall not pass away*, Mat. xxiv. 35. He hath said, that *if you first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added unto you*: Which being his own words, if you do what he here requires of you, he will most certainly do what he hath promised to you. If you first take care to serve and please God, by walking in the ways of holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your life, he'll take care that you shall never want any thing that is truly good and needful for you.

WHICH you cannot but be fully confident of, if you do but consider also the extent of this promise, in that he doth not say, *some, or many, or most*, but *all these things shall be added to you*; that is, as he explains himself in the verse before my text, *All these things which our heavenly Father knoweth we have need of*. For such things as we have no need of, and that in the judgment of God himself, it is no matter whether we have them or no; but all such things as God himself knows to be any way necessary for us, they are all contained in this promise which our Lord here makes us, and which he had made before by his Holy Spirit in David, saying, *They that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing*, Psal. xxxiv. 10. What is not good for us, altho we have it not, yet we cannot be said to want it, because if we had it, it would do us no good; and therefore it is said in the same place, that *there is no want to them that fear God*, ver. 9. because they have all things that are any way needful or good for them. And what our Lord here promised by his prophet, he here repeats with his own mouth, assuring us, that all they who *first seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, shall have *all things necessary both for life and godliness added to them*.

HERE then you see the best course you can ever take, whereby to secure to yourselves not only a sufficient maintenance, but a constant supply of all things that you can ever have any real occasion for in this world. Do but first repent and turn to God, so as to be admitted into his kingdom, and partake of his righteousness, and then all such things will be immediately conferred and settled upon you. You have the word of Christ, of God himself for it; which you must needs acknowledge to be the best security in the world, and therefore ought to rest fully satisfied with it. Wherefore, as ever ye desire to be certain never to want any thing that is good for you, take this course which Christ himself hath prescribed for it; which you'll find to be the only certain course you can ever take, forasmuch as God hath never promised his blessing or success to any other means. I do not deny but that he often scatters the things of this world among the men of it, who may gather them up in great abundance; but this is more than he ever promised them, and by consequence they have no ground to expect it. And whatsoever such men may have, they are still in want: They often want even what they have, and they always want God's blessing upon it, and therefore had as good, if not much better, be without it; whereas, by observing the method which our Lord here teaches, you will be certain to have whatsoever is good in itself, and likewise God's blessing upon it to make it good for you.

WHEREFORE, as ever ye desire to carry yourselves as becometh Christians indeed, you must be sure to do what Christ hath here commanded. Make it your great care and study to serve and honour God, and to seek his kingdom and righteousness in the first place. And when you thus sincerely perform what he hath requir'd of you, you may be confident that he will likewise perform what he hath promised to you. He'll defend and protect you from all evil, and give you whatsoever is really good for you, either in this world or the next. You shall never want either food or raiment, nor yet his blessing upon it. Which that you may be fully assured of, he himself hath here engaged his own word for it, saying to you all, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*



S E R M O N CXIII.

The Sinfulness and Mischief of worldly Anxiety.

P H I L. iv. 6.

Be careful for nothing: But in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

ALTHO the commandments of God now seem grievous to us, and very difficult to be observ'd, yet certainly they were design'd at first for our ease and pleasure; they being all so exactly adapted to our nature, so agreeable to the temper we were made of, that every act of obedience to them refresheth and delights our minds, as *David* long ago observed, calling the *commandments his delights*, Psal. cxix. 143. and saying, that *in keeping of them there is great reward*, Psal. xix. 11. The same might be demonstrated by a particular induction of them, whereby it would be easy to shew, that nothing is forbidden us, but what is some way or other hurtful and prejudicial to us, nothing required of us, but what is really for our good, and conduceth to our present comfort, as well as to our future happiness. I shall instance at present only in that which is enjoined in my text.

WE cannot but be all sensible, how great a misery it is to live in continual fears and cares about the things of this life, and how happily they live, who are free from them, so as never to be disturbed or disquieted in their minds about any thing here below; especially if this proceeds from such principles, and are grounded upon such a foundation as is firm and lasting: and yet we not only may, but ought always to live thus: For this is that which is here enjoined us by the apostle, saying, *Be careful for nothing*, &c.

THE apostle here, in the close of his epistle to them, is directing the *Philippians* how both to carry and support themselves under the various occurrences of this present life. They were likely to meet with many crosses and troubles in the way to heaven, but howsoever he would not have them dejected, but always pleasant and chearful under them: *Rejoyce*, saith he, *in the Lord always*; and to press it the more home upon them, he repeats it again, saying, *Again I say rejoyce*, v. 4. And altho they should receive many affronts and injuries from others, yet he would have them always of an even and sedate temper; not hot and furious, but candid and ingenuous, meek and patient, peaceable and good to all. *Let your moderation*, saith he, *be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand*, both to assist you at present, and ere long to rescue and deliver you. And because they were to expect to be sometimes brought into great streights and difficulties, not knowing well what to do, in such cases he adviseth them not to be too anxious or solicitous, but to do their duty, and to leave the issue to God: *Be careful*, saith he, *for nothing; but in every thing give thanks*, &c. This is in general the sense of the words; but lest we should mistake them, and that we may more clearly and fully understand the mind of the Holy Ghost in them, I shall, by his assistance, shew in what sense we are not,

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and in what sense we are to understand this precept, *Be careful for nothing*; and then explain the following words, wherein the apostle directs what to do in all such cases as are apt to put us upon too much thoughtfulness and care, saying, *But by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*

FIRST therefore, we may observe that the apostle is here speaking not of spiritual but temporal things, and therefore where he saith, *Be careful for nothing*, he is to be understood only of the things of this life, not of those things which concern the life to come; for they ought to be our chief and greatest care of all. And in this very place, where the apostle commands the *Philippians* to be *careful for nothing*, he commends them for being careful of him, that is, of performing the duty which they ow'd him as the minister of Christ. *I rejoiced*, saith he, *greatly in the Lord, that now at last your care of me hath flourished again, wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity*, v. 10. From whence it appears, that the apostle himself distinguisheth between the care of doing our duty to God, and the care of this world, and commends the one as much as he condemns the other. The same apostle elsewhere makes the same distinction more plain, saying, *But I would have you without carefulness: He that is unmarried, careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married, careth for the things that are of this world, how he may please his wife*, 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33. where he first lays down the general rule that he would have them, ἀμεριμνῶντες, without carefulness, the same that is in my text, μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε, *Be careful for nothing*. But then he explains himself, by distinguishing between the things that belong unto the Lord, and the things of the world. About the latter he would have them without carefulness, but not about the former; not about the things that belong unto the Lord, how they may please the Lord. The rule is not to be understood of such things; for, as he himself there intimates, we ought to take care of them, and not of the other. For that very reason we may take care of them, they being indeed the great and only things that we ought to be careful of: For put all together, they are the *one thing needful*, which our Saviour speaks of *Luke* x. 42. and therefore commands us to seek them before all things else; *Seek ye first*, saith he, *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, Mat. vi. 33. To the same purpose is that of *St. Peter*, where he requires us to give all diligence, to use the utmost of our care, to add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; and so to make our calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7, 10.

AND it is very observable, that the same apostle who here commands us to be *careful for nothing*, elsewhere requires all Christians to be *careful to maintain good works*, Tit. iii. 8. and that he himself was so: For having reckon'd up the many troubles he had met with in the world, he adds, *Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches*, 2 Cor. xi. 28. If *St. Peter* had said this, what a stir would the church of *Rome* have made about it? How would they have triumph'd in it, as a most infallible proof that he was Christ's vicar upon earth, the universal bishop of the whole world, who had the care of all the churches? But it is well that it was not *St. Peter*, but *St. Paul* that said it; and he said it only to shew how careful he was in the discharge of his apostolical office towards the whole church of Christ; and so hath left us an undeniable argument, that he was at least as much an universal bishop as *St. Peter* was: And also that we, after his example, ought to be careful to perform our whole duty in our respective places: And by consequence that when he commands us to be *careful for nothing*, he doth not mean that we should not be careful to avoid whatsoever is offensive to God, and to do what is pleasing in his sight, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world: But rather that we be so careful of such things, as to be careful of nothing else.

BUT here we may observe, that even in such things we may be too careful, that is, as the original word signifies, too anxious, too much distracted and divided in our thoughts about them; as many are, who do what they can to live according to the rules of the gospel, and yet suspect their spiritual estate; and never thinking they can do enough, run into the contrary extreme, of doing many things which are not required at their hands. Such are they who whip and scourge, and maccerate their bodies, and so make themselves unserviceable to God and the world.

And such are they also, who out of a groundless care and fear of offending God, scruple the doing of such things as he hath no where forbidden, and therefore will not be offended at their doing of them. This is the case not only of those who dissent from us, but of many good people among ourselves, who being of a fearful and melancholy temper, indulge a strange kind of nicety and scrupulosity of conscience about things in themselves indifferent: And this seems to be that which the wise man forbids, where he saith, *Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself over-wise: Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* Eccles. vii. 16. As if he had said, be not superstitious, or over-scrupulous about such things in religion, as thou mayst or mayst not do without sin: nor make thyself over-wise, as if thou sawest virtue or vice, where no body else can see it: *Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* or rather, as the word signifies, Why shouldst thou stupefy, astonish, or confound thyself? For so they all do, who trouble their heads about such little things; they do but confound and perplex their own thoughts, and take them off from the more substantial parts of religion. This therefore is that which we ought to avoid: We ought not to be too careful and solicitous about doubtful and indifferent things, but apply our minds wholly to the plain and necessary matters of the law, and trouble ourselves no farther, but trust in our blessed Saviour, for the pardon of our defects, and for God's acceptance of what we do, upon the account of what he hath done and suffered for us.

BUT I shall speak no more of that at present, because the apostle speaks not of it in my text; for by saying, *Be careful for nothing*, he means only that we should not be careful about temporal or earthly things; that we should avoid those cares which our Saviour calls, *μερίμνας βιωτικὰς*, *The cares of this life*, Luke xxi. 34. and *μερίμνας τῆ αἰῶνος τῆς*, *the cares of this world*, Mat. xiii. 22.

BUT here also we must take care that we do not mistake his meaning, so as to think that he would not have us take any care at all of any thing here below: For so long as we live in this world, it is absolutely necessary that we take some care about our living in it. So long as our souls are united to our bodies, we are bound by the laws of God and nature, to take care of our bodies as well as souls. Our souls indeed, and their concerns, are to be regarded in the first place; but after them, we ought to look to our bodies also, that they may want nothing that is necessary for their subsistence, so long as God shall see good to continue our souls in them. And for that purpose all who cannot well subsist without it, not only may, but ought to follow some honest trade or calling, whereby to support themselves and their families.

BUT because the right understanding of this may be of great use to many here present, I shall briefly give you what instructions and directions I think necessary about it, in these following propositions.

FIRST, All are bound to follow some calling or trade, unless they have enough to live upon without it. I add this, unless they have enough to live upon without following any trade; because there are some who have great estates convey'd to them by inheritance, or by gift, from their ancestors or relations; others, who by God's blessing upon their own endeavours, have attain'd as much as is sufficient to maintain them while they are in the world, and so need not follow any trade, at least for that purpose. But such must not look upon themselves as having nothing to do in the world, for really they have as much to do, if not more, than other people: Forasmuch as they who follow a trade, always know their business, their work lies before them: Whereas others are forced, or at least ought to study every day what to do, and how to employ their time and their estates, so as to give a good account of them at the last day. And when they have found it out, they ought to apply their minds as seriously to it, as if their lives depended upon it; for so their eternal life doth, though not their temporal. They may perhaps live well enough without doing any thing in this world, but they cannot expect to live well in the next world without it; for their welfare there depends not upon what they have, but upon what they do here: Insomuch that they who do nothing but live upon their estates, will have but little cause to be glad they had estates to live upon, when they shall hear their great Lord and Master pronounce that dreadful sentence against them, which he in the parable did against that idle servant, who did not improve, but hide his master's talent in a napkin; saying, *Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Mat. xxv. 30.

WHEREFORE they whom God hath blessed with considerable estates, or with such a competency whereby they are able to keep themselves and families without the assistance of a trade, they must have a care that they do not live idly, and to no purpose in the world, mere cyphers that signify nothing, but like the tree in the parable, which only *cumber'd the ground*, and therefore was fit for nothing but to be *cut down, and cast into the fire*: But such persons ought rather to look upon themselves as being of an higher calling, and as having more to do than others: They have more time to spare, and therefore should spend more in their publick and private devotions; their thoughts are freer from the cares of this world, and therefore ought to be more intent upon the next; they need not trouble their heads about getting an estate, and therefore should be more careful how they use it; they have commonly more than what they have real need of themselves, and therefore should give more to those who want it: In short, they have more advantages of serving and glorifying God in the world, and therefore are more obliged to do it, as they tender their own eternal welfare.

WHEN I seriously consider these things, I cannot but sometimes wonder with myself, what should make men so eager in getting great estates for their children, when by that means they do but expose their children to greater hardships and temptations than they themselves lay under, and make it more difficult for them ever to get to heaven: Our Saviour himself, by whom alone we can come thither, having told us with his own mouth, that *a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Mat. xix. 23. And even in this life, all things consider'd, they who are forced to follow a trade, and do accordingly follow it as they ought, may live every way as comfortably, and much more safely than they. And how much soever a man hath, it is certainly his best and wisest course to have some trade or calling, or office, or at least some business, either publick or private, always to do, so long as he is able, whereby he may employ his time, his parts, his learning, his strength, his interest, his estate, and whatsoever talents God hath put into his hand; so that he may answer God's end in sending him into the world, and in bestowing such blessings upon him.

FOR in plain terms, God did not make man to sit still and do nothing: The first man he made, he had no sooner made him, but he immediately put him into the garden of *Eden, to dress it, and to keep it*, Gen. ii. 15. This was the first *Adam's* employment, even in the state of innocence and perfection. And the second *Adam* too, until he enter'd upon his office of Mediator, follow'd a trade that tended to the same end; for *Joseph*, to whom his mother was espoused, being a *carpenter*, he himself is said to be of the same trade, Mark vi. 3. and his business was to make *ploughs and yokes for oxen, in order to tilling the ground*, as *Justin Martyr* informs us, who liv'd soon after him. And one reason, as the same Father observes, wherefore our Lord followed that trade, was, that he might teach us, *ἐνεργῆ βίον, an active life*; to avoid idleness, as the great occasion of vice and wickedness. And as our Lord hath taught us this by his example, so by his precept too: For *St. Paul* speaking in his name, and by the direction of his Holy Spirit, laid this as a command upon the *Thessalonians*, and in them upon all Christians, saying, *For when we were with you, this we commanded you, That if any man would not work, neither should he eat: For we hear that there are some among you, which walk disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread*, 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11, 12. Where we may observe, that he reckons no man's bread his own, but what he gets by his own labour and industry. But by *bread* we are here to understand, as the word usually signifies in scripture, *all things necessary to the support of human life*. Such things every man is obliged to provide for himself; and not only for himself, but likewise for his kindred and relations, which are not able to provide them for themselves. For the same apostle saith in another place, *If any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, or kindred, he hath deny'd the faith, and is worse than an infidel*, 1 Tim. v. 8. *He hath deny'd the faith*, that is, he hath renounced that faith which works by love, and in effect hath apostatiz'd from the Christian religion, by not observing the precepts of it; and so is as bad, nay, *worse than infidels*. For infidels, or heathens, by the very light of nature, used to take care of their parents, and children, and others that were nearly related to them. And therefore he who professes the faith of Christ, and so knows it to be his duty from the word of God himself, if he notwithstanding will

will not do it, he is really worse than an infidel, and will be more severely punish'd for it another day.

AND suppose a man really hath, or thinks he hath enough for himself and family, he is not therefore discharged from his calling, so long as God gives him opportunity and strength to follow it: For that a man is bound to do, not only for his own sake, and his relations, but likewise that he may be thereby enabled to do good to others also: according to that of the apostle, *Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his own hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*, Eph. iv. 28. *To him that needeth*, i. e. any man that wants the necessaries of this life: Such a one every man is bound to relieve, altho he is forced to work hard to do it. And one great end which men propose to themselves in carrying on their trade, ought to be this, even that they may be in a capacity of helping and relieving such as are in want, and cannot help or relieve themselves.

BUT as all men are for these ends bound to follow some trade or calling; so in the next place, we must observe, that the trade or calling they follow should be lawful and honest: The thing they do should be good, as St. Paul speaks in the words before quoted. It must not be vicious in itself, nor minister occasion of vice to others: For then it is not a trade or calling, but treason or rebellion against God. But that which a man employs himself in for the purposes before-mention'd, must be either commanded, or approv'd of, or at least allow'd by the word of God. It must be some way useful either to church or state, either to mens souls or bodies, to private persons, or to the publick society in which they dwell. The calling which contributes to any such uses, is lawful and good; otherwise not: For otherwise a man spends his time to ill purposes, or, which is almost as bad, to none at all.

WHEREFORE, as ever you desire to employ yourselves well, as becometh honest good men, you must be sure to follow such a calling as suits with the apostle's rule, where he saith, *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things*, Phil. iv. 8. For these are the things that make a calling good, profitable to a man's self, useful to the world, and acceptable to Almighty God.

IN the last place, Whatsoever such trade or calling a man is of, he ought to follow it with care and diligence; not to loiter away his time, and neglect his business upon every slight occasion; but always remember that his calling is the means whereby God hath design'd to supply him and his with all things necessary for this life; and therefore if he neglect it, he doth not only expose himself to ruin and poverty, but he wrongs, he robs his family and poor relations of the maintenance which God hath provided for them by that means. There is no honest and lawful calling that a man is of, but if it be not his own fault, he may live comfortably upon it, and get as much as God knows to be necessary and proper for him in his place and station; and so be as rich as he need to be in this world. But for that purpose, it is not enough that he hath a calling, but he must be diligent and industrious in it: For, as the wise man observes, *He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand, but the hand of the diligent maketh rich*, Prov. x. 4. not of itself, but because the blessing of God attends it, without which all our care and diligence will come to nothing. But as we have no ground to expect God's blessing, except we be diligent; if we be so, we have no cause to mistrust it: For he is never wanting to any man that is not first wanting to himself.

HENCE therefore I would recommend to your serious consideration and daily practice, that excellent rule of the apostle, where he commands, *That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands; that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing*, 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12. He doth not say, that ye may abound in riches, purchase great estates, or advance your families; but *that ye may have lack of nothing*; which is enough in all reason; for he who lacks nothing, is as rich as he that hath all things: for he hath all things he lacks. But for this purpose, ye must study, first, *to be quiet*, to live peaceably with all men: And then ye must study likewise *to do your own business*; *τὰ ἰδία*, those things which are proper to yourselves, and to your own calling, without meddling with other mens affairs any farther than to do them all the good ye can. So that in short, whatsoever trade, calling, office, or employ-

ment a man is of, it is his duty to mind it; and to mind it also with care and diligence, that by God's blessing upon it, he may be able to maintain himself and his family by it.

AND therefore, when the apostle in my text saith, *be careful for nothing*, he cannot be so understood, as if he forbid us to use all due care and diligence, every one in his own particular calling: For this would be to forbid that in this place, which he himself elsewhere, and the scriptures all along command.

BUT what then doth he here forbid? He forbids in general, that over-carefulness, sollicitude, and anxiety of mind, about the things of this life, which many, too many, are subject to; who never thinking they shall have enough, and always fearing, that notwithstanding all their care, they shall come to want; their minds are distracted, their thoughts trouble them, their hearts are divided and rent as it were in pieces, casting this way, and that way, and every way, and yet know not which way to take; like a troubled sea, tossed to and fro with every wind that blows: whatsoever happens, they have no peace, no rest, or quiet in themselves: If they lose never so little, they think presently they are undone: If they get never so much, unless it be as much as they expected, it is all one: They moil, and toil; they rise up early, and sit up late, and eat their bread with carefulness; and all for fear they should have none to eat: How much soever God hath given them at present, they dare not trust him for the future; and therefore are still bustling about to provide for themselves as well as they can. If they be in any streight, they think of every thing how to get out, except him who alone can help them. If they seem to be in any danger, tho it be never so remote, it strikes them to the heart, and puts them into an hurry and confusion. If they have any business more than ordinary upon their hands, they stretch their brains to the highest pitch, till they come to their wits end, how to do it to the best advantage for themselves. By which means they live as it were in a maze or labyrinth, not knowing which way to go, and yet running about as if they did. In short, they live as without God in the world, or at least without any trust or dependence upon him: And therefore, as if they were their own carvers, they bend their minds wholly to take care of themselves, and of all their concerns in this life, without ever looking up to him to direct and assist them in it.

THIS is that carefulness which the apostle here forbids: And not only the height of it, as I have now describ'd it, but every degree of it, and every such indisposition or distemper of mind as tends towards it.

AND you will not wonder that he should forbid it, when you consider the vanity, the trouble, the sinfulness, and the mischiefs of it: Which I shall therefore put you in mind of, that ye may more fully understand the nature of it, and also be better armed against it for the future.

THE vanity of it appears sufficiently, in that our carefulness is all to no purpose, about the things of this life; for after all, they are wholly at God's disposal. He gives, and takes, and doth what he will with them. He measures them out to all as he sees good, and it is not in our power either to direct or hinder him. This is the argument which our Lord himself makes use of, to shew the vanity of all worldly cares, saying, *Which of you by taking care can add one cubit to his stature, or age, Mat. vi. 27.* And as for our thoughtfulness about what we shall eat, or drink, or wear, he there shews that God feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field most gorgeously, without their care or labour; and therefore men being much better than they, have no cause to doubt but he will provide all things necessary for them, without their being so careful and solicitous about it; and by consequence, all their carefulness and sollicitude must needs be in vain, and to no purpose, ver. 25, 26, 28, 30. Neither is this only a great vanity, but, as the wise man speaks, it is *vexation of spirit too*. It is a great trouble and disquietness to our minds, to be always upon the wrack, distorted and distracted with cares and fears, as the men of this world commonly are, *piercing themselves through with many sorrows*, as the apostle observes, *1 Tim. vi. 10.* and so making their own lives very uneasy and troublesome, always tormenting their heads, and their hearts too, with excessive sollicitude, either how to get more, or else to keep what they have got. And as if they had not trouble enough at present, they will trouble themselves too about what is future; and grieve to day, because they may have occasion to do so to morrow. This is that which our blessed Saviour forewarns us

against,

against, saying, *Take no thought, or be not careful, for the morrow: For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof,* Mat. vi. 34. As if he had said, Every day brings care and trouble enough along with it: And it is sufficient that you bear and manage it aright as it comes. But do not anticipate troubles, and make yourselves miserable now, because ye may be so anon. Be not thoughtful about what may, or may not happen hereafter: For this will not prevent or alleviate, but aggravate and hasten your troubles; as they find by woful experience, who concern themselves too much about future events.

AND it would be well, if there was nothing else but trouble in it. But alas! this excessive carefulness and anxiety of mind about the worldly things, is sinful as well as troublesome. It is expressly forbidden by Almighty God in my text, and in many other places of scripture: And it is always accompany'd with, or rather it proceeds from one of the greatest sins a man can be guilty of, even unbelief, or at least want of faith and trust in God: As our Saviour intimates, where arguing against it, he saith, *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith!* Mat. vi. 30. They must needs be of little faith indeed, if any at all, who are solicitous about such things as God hath promised to give them, without their being so; and therefore mistrust his promises as well as break his laws, and so are guilty of a double sin, in every single act of such excessive thoughtfulness about any thing in this world.

BUT who is able to reckon up, or describe the many and great mischiefs which attend this sin? I shall not undertake to do that; but shall only put you in mind of some of them, which, if duly consider'd, will make you beware of it, and dread the thoughts of ever falling into it, much more of living in it.

FIRST therefore, It is this carefulness for the world, that hinders and keeps you off from performing your duty unto God. So long as your minds are so intent about the things of this life, it is impossible that you should love, fear, or trust in God, or serve and honour him as you ought to do: No, ye have other business to mind than what he hath set you. And therefore, altho ye have never so many opportunities of performing your devotions to him, ye can find no time, or rather, ye cannot find it in your hearts to do it; your thoughts being wholly taken up with other affairs, of a different and quite contrary nature.

THIS our Saviour himself noted in *Martha*. She and her sister *Mary* keeping house together, our Lord was pleas'd to honour them with his company. *Martha* being mightily pleas'd, as well she might, with his company, was very careful and busy about providing for his entertainment, or, as the text saith, *was cumber'd about much serving*: While *Mary* in the mean time sat at *Jesus's* feet, hearing his divine discourses. Upon which, *Martha* having more upon her hands than she could well do, desired our Lord to bid her sister come and help her. But instead of that, our Lord said to her, *Martha, Martha, Thou art careful, and troubled with many things: But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her,* Luke x. 41, 42. If it ever can be lawful to be cumber'd with worldly business, it must needs be so upon such an extraordinary occasion, when they had got so divine a guest in their house. Yet we see our Saviour plainly reproves *Martha* for her over-carefulness, even upon that occasion, because it hinder'd her from attending, as her sister did, to his doctrine. And I fear there be many among us, who upon sliether occasions neglect the service of God; being so *careful and troubled about many things*, that they never think of *the one thing needful*, except perhaps upon the Lord's day, when they cannot mind the world, and so have nothing else to do. For we find by sad experience, that upon the week-days, when you can follow your worldly business, our churches are empty, and God's service neglected. Which is a plain demonstration, that your over-carefulness for this life, hinders you from taking any care at all of the next.

NEITHER doth this hinder you only from serving God, but it hinders you also in the doing of it. For so long as your minds are distracted about the world, it is impossible you should serve God without distraction: As Christ himself saith, *No man can serve two masters: Ye cannot serve God and mammon,* Mat. vi. 24. Ye cannot possibly be intent upon two things at the same time, and especially upon things so directly opposite to one another, as God and the world. And therefore so long as your thoughts are wholly taken up with the things of this life, as they

commonly are, it is no wonder that ye cannot keep them close to any duty ye perform to God. But in the midst of your most solemn devotions, publick or private, worldly thoughts will still be crouding in, and spoil all ye do. From whence ye may see the reason why there are so few in the world that serve God at all, and much fewer that serve him well: Most being such as the prophet speaks of, who *come before God as the people cometh, and sit before him as his people, and with their mouth shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness*, Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

AND as this disturbs men in doing their duty, so it deprives them of all the benefit and comfort which they might receive from what they do; and makes the means of grace ineffectual and useless. For this ye have Christ's own observation and word; who, in the parable of the sower, saith, *He that receiveth seed among thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful*, Mat. xiii. 22. From whence ye may see the great cause, why men in this age hear so much, and practise so little: even because whatsoever you hear, the cares of this world immediately put it out of your thoughts. You never think any more of it, and then it is no wonder that ye are never the wiser or better for it.

AND yet this is not all neither: For this excessive carefulness about the things of this life, doth not only hinder you from doing or receiving good, but it exposeth you to all manner of sin and wickedness. The wise man tells you, that *He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent*, Prov. xxviii. 20. And St. Paul to the same purpose; *They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*, 1 Tim. vi. 9. And you cannot but all observe the same of all manner of worldly cares; how they put men upon envy and hatred, upon wrath and fury, strife and contention with one another; upon lying, swearing, and perjury; upon oppression and extortion; upon cheating, stealing, and robbing upon the high-way: yea, upon going to the devil himself, and consulting him and his agents about their worldly concerns.

THIS I rather mention in a more particular manner, because I have heard, there are some in this city, as well as elsewhere, who, if they have lost any thing, or would know something of their friends beyond sea, or of their future state in this world, presently go to those which they call astrologers, wizzards, conjurors, or the like, to be inform'd about it; which is plainly going to the devil for it. For whether those kind of people they go to, deal with him or no, they who go to them, consult them as if they did; and so are co-partners with them in their wickedness, whatsoever it is, whether it be real witchcraft and forcery, or only confederacy and cheat. And therefore, as by the law of Moses a *witch* was not *suffered to live*, Exod. xxii. 18. so in the same law God hath expressly commanded, that none shall *seek after*, nor so much as *regard wizzards, or such as have familiar spirits*, Lev. xix. 31. And if any do so, he saith, that he will *set his face against them, and cut them off from his people*, Lev. xx. 6. And indeed it is very rare, but God inflicts some remarkable judgment upon those who consult such as exercise, or pretend to that which they call the *Black Art*. And if they happen to escape in this life, they will smart more severely for it in the next; it being one of the greatest sins that a man can be guilty of: It is a kind of apostacy, a leaving God to go to the devil: And all from excessive carefulness about something in this world; which is plainly the only cause that puts silly people upon such wicked practices as these are.

I SHALL add to these only one more of the many mischiefs which arise from the same cause; and that is the same which Christ himself puts you in mind of, where he saith, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares*, Luke xxi. 34. Where ye see, how he who will be your judge, being desirous that you should not be surpris'd, or taken unawares, hath forewarn'd you, that the cares of this life will make you as unfit to appear before him, as surfeiting and drunkenness itself. Which when I sometimes consider with myself, I cannot but pity those who go out of this world, as many I fear do, in the midst of worldly cares, and by consequence as unfit to die, as they who are downright drunk. And therefore must beg of you always to remember your Saviour's words, and take heed that your hearts be not over-charged with the cares of this life, lest ye die too in that condition, and so be miserable for ever.

BUT you'll say perhaps, What would you have us do? Would you not have us to mind our trade? Yes, by all means; you are bound in conscience to do it, as I shew'd before. It is your duty to mind every one his own calling in this world, while ye live in it. But it is also your duty to mind God, and that world, where ye must live for ever. And although you ought to use all due care and diligence about your trade, as if ye were to live by it; yet ye must not be so careful and anxious about it, as if you could live by that without God's blessing upon it; which you can have no ground to expect, if your minds be more intent upon that, than upon him in whom you live, and from whom, after all, you must receive it, or else have nothing to live on. And therefore if you would follow your trades as becometh Christians, you must be diligent and industrious in them; but you must not be fearful and solicitous about the event and success of them, but leave that wholly and solely to God; trusting and depending upon him to give you that success, which he in his infinite wisdom knows to be best for you: And trouble your heads no more about it. This you will find to be not only the most easy and comfortable way of living and trading in the world, but likewise the most effectual course you can take, never to want any thing that is necessary or good for you. For God himself will provide all such things for you, if you trust upon him for it.

THIS holds good, not only as to your trading and trafficking in the world for a livelihood, but likewise as to all the changes and chances of this mortal life. Whatsoever danger you fear, whatsoever streight or difficulty you are in, you must not suffer your minds to be disturb'd or distracted about it; but lift up your hearts to God, and commit yourselves and your affairs all to him, and then he'll be sure to take care of you, so as either to bring you out of your streights, or which is better, turn them to your advantage. For this you have his own word, where he saith, *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you,* 1 Pet. v. 7. And again, *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall not suffer the righteous to be moved,* Psalm lv. 22. And elsewhere, *Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass,* Psalm xxxvii. 3, 4, 5. There are many such promises in holy scripture, whereby we are fully assur'd, that if we use the means for attaining any thing that is truly good for us, and be not over-careful about them, but trust in God for his blessing upon them, we shall certainly attain the thing we aim'd at, or something better.

THIS is the more to be observed here, because it will help us to understand the latter part of my text, where the apostle having said, *Be careful for nothing,* adds, *But in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* *Be made known unto God,* may ye say? Doth not God know them before? Yes, certainly: But as a father knows his child wants such and such things, and yet will not give him them, till he hath ask'd them of him; so God knows, as our Saviour saith, *that we have need of these things,* the things of this life; but before he gives them, he will have us make known, and acknowledge our want of them to him, and pray to him for them, to signify our dependence upon him, and our obligation to him for what we have. Concerning which there are three things observable in my text.

FIRST, That as we are to *be careful for nothing,* we ought to *pray for every thing:* *In every thing,* saith the apostle, great or small. Whatsoever it is we want, we must request it of God.

SECONDLY, To our prayers and supplications we must always add thanksgiving: Thankfulness for what we have, being the best means whereby to obtain what we want. And then,

LASTLY, This is all the apostle would have us do in every thing, in every condition, in every circumstance of our whole life; even *by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make known our requests to God;* and when we have done that, he would have us trouble ourselves no more about any thing, but leave all to God, with a sure trust and confidence, that he, according to his promise, will grant our requests, which we have made known to him, so far as he knows it to be good for us. This is the course he would have us take upon all occasions. And he

he that takes this course, need be careful for nothing, for he'll have God himself to take care of all things for him: As we may see in many instances.

WHEN *Jehosaphat* was in a great streight, by reason of vast armies that were coming against him, he made known his case to God, saying, *We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee*, 2 Chron. xx. 12. He prayed, and trusted in God, who therefore fought for him, making his enemies destroy one another.

WHEN *Nebuchadnezzar* had threaten'd the three children, that they should be thrown into a fiery furnace, unless they would worship the image which he had set up; they were so far from being solicitous, as most people would have been about such a matter as concern'd their lives, that they plainly told him, *We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: If it be so, as thou speakest, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand*, O king, Dan. iii. 16, 17. They were not careful about it, but trusted in God, who therefore sent his angel to deliver them. This is the rule which Christ prescribed to his disciples in all the troubles they were likely to meet with, saying, *When they shall deliver you up, take no thought, be not careful, how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak*, Mat. x. 19. If ever they might be careful, it might be upon such occasions; but even upon such occasions as those our Lord would have them take no thought about it, but only trust in the promise which he made them. I cannot omit that remarkable instance of *St. Paul and Silas*, who being in prison, were so far from being thoughtful how to get out, that at midnight they prayed, and sang praises to God; upon which, the prison doors were open'd, their bands loosed, and next morning they were both released, *Acts* xvi.

THERE are many such instances in scripture, of God's particular care of those who trust on him. And tho these may seem extraordinary, and ye cannot expect that he should now work miracles for you; yet if you will but make trial of it, ye will find him still both able and ready to assist and help you upon all occasions, by his ordinary providence, as effectually as if it was extraordinary and miraculous.

THIS therefore is that which I would now advise you to. Whatsoever business ye have upon your hands, how great and difficult soever it may seem, do not stretch your thoughts, be not careful about it, but do what you think at present to be best, and apply yourselves to God, believing, and trusting on him for his direction and assistance; and then ye will find that all will be well, far better than your solicitude and thoughtfulness can make it. For then God himself will take the business into his own hands. As ye depend upon him for it, he will concern himself in it. He will direct your thoughts to the best means, and assist and bless you in the use of them. He will keep off every thing that may any way impede or hinder it. He will order all things relating to it, so as to make them concur to the effecting of it. And if you thus always cast your care upon him, he will always take care of you. He'll instruct you by his wisdom, he'll guide you by his counsel, he'll assist you by his grace, he'll sanctify and comfort you by his Holy Spirit, he'll strengthen and protect you by his almighty yower, and at last receive you to himself in glory, through the merits of his only Son: *To whom, &c.*



S E R M O N CXIV.

The Great Duty of Loving God.

M A T. xxii. 37, 38.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

ALL that have any true sense of God upon their minds, cannot but express it by doing something which they think may please him; and seeing they can never do it without keeping his commandments, therefore they offer at that. But such is the weakness of our corrupt nature, that there are but few that strive, or so much as think of keeping all his commandments, but most men take up with few of them, and such commonly as are of the least weight. The *Pharisees* themselves, the strictest Sect in all the *Jewish* religion, they paid tithe of *mint, and annise, and cummin*, but omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; as the Lawgiver himself told them, and then said, *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*, Mat. xxiii. 23. whereby he hath signified his divine will, that none of his commandments should be slighted or neglected, but that all should be observed one as well as another. And yet notwithstanding there are some weightier than others, which he would have us take special care to observe. This the *Jews* themselves seem to be sensible of, so as to dispute among themselves, which should be esteemed the greatest commandment in the law: Some thinking that *circumcision*, others the *sabbath*; some that the *paying of tithes and offerings*, others that the *sacrifices* were most strictly commanded; and therefore that the commandments about them were most necessary to be observed. And not agreeing among themselves about it, one of them, being a scribe or lawyer, whose business it was to search into the true meaning of the law, propounded the question to our blessed Saviour, *tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great, or greatest commandment in the law?* He little thought that he spake to the Lawgiver himself, and therefore did not expect such an answer as he received. For Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* Which being the oracle or answer of God himself to a question put to him concerning his own law, deserves to be particularly consider'd by all that really desire to observe it.

BUT I cannot but first take notice of two things in general, concerning the answers which our blessed Saviour made to the questions which the *Jews* propounded to him. The first is, That altho their questions were usually propounded out of a very ill design, even to *entangle him* in his talk, that they might have something whereof they might accuse him; yet he took no notice of that, but gave them such answers, as are of general and perpetual use to his church. So that we could not

have been without any one of them; but have infinite cause to thank God for the very captious questions that were propounded to him, and the gracious answers he was pleased to return to them: Whereby we may see his divine wisdom and power, in bringing good out of evil.

THE other thing to be observed, is, That whatsoever question they propounded to our Saviour, he gave them so full and satisfactory an answer to it, that they never had any thing to reply upon it; but went away with wonder and amazement. When he was but twelve years old, as he was sitting among the *Rabbies* or Doctors at Jerusalem, both hearing them, and asking them questions; all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers, Luke ii. 47. So it was all his life after. We need not go far for instances. In this very chapter, he answered the *Pharisees* question about paying tribute to *Cesar*, so that when they had heard his words, they marvelled and left him, and went their way, ver. 22. And when the *Sadducees* put a question to him about the resurrection of the dead, he gave them so clear a solution of it, as did not only put them to silence, but when the multitude heard it, they were astonished at his doctrine, ver. 33, 34. And when one of the scribes or lawyers perceived that he had answer'd both the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* so well, as to put them to silence, he also propounded a question, this great question to him, *Which is the first commandment of all?* And our Lord gave him so full and clear an answer to it, that he immediately confessed the truth of what he said, saying, *Well, Master, thou hast said the truth. For there is one God, and there is none other but He. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices,* Mark xii. 32, 33. By this it seems their sacrifices were esteemed, at least by some, as the chief part of their law. But this lawyer had no sooner heard our Saviour's solution of his question, but he was convinced of the contrary, and was forced to own that all their burnt-offerings and sacrifices, put them all together, how many soever they were, they still came short of a man's loving God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself; that this was indeed the great commandment of all; as our Lord told him, and order'd it to be recorded, that all may know it.

AND indeed, this which our Lord here calls the *first and great commandment* in the law, is intimated to be so in the law itself, where it is written; *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,* Deut. vi. 4, 5, where we see this commandment proclaimed, with a preface proper and peculiar to itself, and such a one as requires a special regard to be had to it. *Hear, O Israel.* And in the *Hebrew*, the last letter of the first word is greater than ordinary, to shew that there is something extraordinary in this commandment, and that it is indeed, as our Saviour here calls it, the great commandment in the law. And besides, this preface contains the substance of all that we ought to believe concerning God, as the commandment doth our whole duty to him. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.* He is the Lord, *Jehovah*, Being, or Essence itself, existing in and of himself, and giving both essence and existence to all things else. And he is our God. The original word is of the plural number, denoting the Trinity of the divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: All and every one of which is here said to be our God. The Father is our God, and our Father: The Son, our God, and our Saviour: The Holy Ghost, our God, and our Sanctifier. All which supposeth and implies our reconciliation to God by the death of Christ, without which we could not have had him to be our God. But lest we should think that the Three Divine Persons, signified by that plural name *Elohim*, are so many several Gods, it followeth, *our God is one Lord, one Jehovah*, or simply *One* (with a great letter also :) Which needed not to be added, if no more than one divine Person had been signified by it; the Unity of the Godhead being sufficiently declared by his name *Jehovah*, Being in general, which can be but One. So that the addition of the word *One*, is an undeniable argument, that a Trinity of Persons is imply'd in the foresaid Name, and that it is the will of God that we should believe him to be *Three Persons*, and *One Jehovah, One God*; and that the *Jews* repeating, as they anciently did, these words every day, did thereby profess their belief of the Trinity in Unity, altho' they did not understand it so well as we now do by the light of the gospel.

THE foundation of our faith in Almighty God being thus laid down in these words, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, or divine Persons, is One Lord*, the great duty to be built upon it, is subjoin'd in the words immediately following: *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* This is that which our great Lord and Master Jesus Christ hath taught us to be the *first and great commandment*. And therefore we must be sure to learn and practise this, as ever we desire to shew ourselves to be his scholars or disciples indeed. For which purpose it will be necessary to consider the true meaning and extent of this commandment; what great reason it is grounded upon; wherefore it is called the *first and great commandment*; and how happy they are who keep it. Unto which few heads, all that is necessary to be known concerning it, may be easily reduced.

First THEREFORE, By the *Lord thy God*, as I have already observed from the original, is here meant that Almighty Being, *Jehovah*, which made, preserves, and governs the whole world, and hath revealed itself in the holy scriptures to be *Three in One*; *The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, these Three are One*, 1 John v. 7, that is, as it is here expressed, *One Jehovah, One Lord*. And therefore as we are here commanded to love *Jehovah*, or the divine Essence in general, so we are commanded to love each of the divine Persons alike. And as they are all of one and the same nature, we must have the same affection for one that we have for the other. For *all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him*, John v. 23. So he that doth not love the Son begotten of the Father, doth not love the Father that begot him. And he that doth not love the Holy Ghost, that proceedeth from the Father and the Son, doth not love either the Father or the Son, from whom he proceedeth. Wherefore, that our faith and love to God may be such as he hath commanded, it must be equally fix'd upon each of these divine Persons, not as so many several Gods, but as being all one and the same God, blessed for ever.

NEITHER are we here commanded to love him only as he is the Lord, but likewise as he is our God. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*: Not thy *Jehovah*; for that word never hath any adjunct, or pronoun, or any thing else affixed to it: But *thy God*, or the divine Persons, as he made thee, saves thee, and sanctifies thee; and so is the Author both of thy being and well-being: According to the covenant that he hath made with us, saying, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*, Jer. xxxi. 33. And as he is thus in a peculiar manner related to us, we ought accordingly to love him with all our hearts. How we must do that, comes next to be considered.

WHAT it is to love in general, we know by experience better than by any definition or description that can be given of it. For when we apprehend a thing to be good and agreeable to us, or any way convenient or profitable for us, we feel our hearts moving as it were towards it, being sensibly touch'd with a liking of it, and a good will to it; with complacency and delight in it if it be present with us, and if it be at any distance from us, with such desires and longings for it, as put us upon reaching at it, and labouring all we can after it. Thus people are commonly affected towards something or other in this world, because they apprehend it to be good for them. But such apprehensions being rais'd in them only by their fancy or imagination, the affection that is moved by them depends in a great measure upon the temper and humours of the body; and therefore hath little or nothing in it like that love which we ought to have for God. For we are commanded to love him with all our hearts, with all our soul, and with all our mind. Whether these three terms, the *heart*, the *soul*, and the *mind*, be here used to denote so many distinct faculties in the soul, as some have thought, it is not material to enquire. Be sure they all together signify, that true love to God is seated wholly in the soul; without depending at all upon the body, or sensitive part, as the love of other things doth. It is not our fancy, but our reason or understanding that represents Almighty God to us, as the chiefest good. And when we accordingly choose and embrace him as such, when we are truly said to love him: And to love him with all our heart; when our whole soul is thus inclin'd to him, and all our affections meet in him as in their proper center, and cleave so fast to him, that nothing is able to get them off, or remove them from him; all things else seeming, as they are, even as nothing at all in comparison of him.

THIS

THIS is true love to God indeed. Neither can any man be said to love him at all, that doth not thus love him with all his heart, so as to love nothing above him, nothing equal to him, nothing at all in comparison of him. Let us hear what he himself saith, *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me*, Mat. x. 37. The love of children to parents, especially that of parents to children, is the truest and strongest love that men can have to any thing upon earth; it is strictly commanded also by God, and implanted in our very nature: And yet it seems by this saying of our Lord, that if a child loves his parents, or a parent his children, more than God, he is not worthy to be reckon'd among those who love God at all. Elsewhere he goes much higher, saying, *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and his brethren, and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*, Luke xiv. 26, which is not to be so understood, as if he would have us absolutely hate such near relations, which he himself elsewhere commands us to love; but that we should love him so much above them, that our love to them should appear as hatred rather than love, in comparison of that which we have for him: so that if we be brought into such a strait, that we cannot do it to both, but must shew our love either to God, or to the nearest relations we have in the world, we must regard them no more than as if we hated them, but with an holy scorn throw them out of our thoughts, as not worthy to come into competition with him that made them. When we thus love God above all things in the world besides, howsoever near or dear they may be unto us, so as to be able, without any long pause, to part with any thing for his sake; then, and not till then, we may be truly said to love him *with all our hearts*.

BUT when this sacred fire of divine love is thus kindled in a man's breast, it is not confin'd there, but breaks forth immediately, and shews itself in his thoughts, in his affections, in his words, and in all the actions of his life. For when a man thus loves God with all his heart, he cannot but be always thinking of him (as all people do upon those they love) and contemplating upon those divine perfections which so forcibly attract his heart unto them, that it is always restless and unquiet, until it be fix'd entirely upon them. And therefore, altho' he could see all the kingdoms of the earth, and all the glory of them, at one view, he would find nothing there to bound his desires, but they would still be carried higher, and higher still, and never rest till they get to him whom his soul loves: As we see in David, crying out, *Whom have I in heaven, O God, but thee? And there is none upon earth I desire besides thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 25. And when the soul is thus upon the wing, flying up to heaven, and there looking upon Almighty God as his God and Saviour, it cannot but rejoice *with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. So that, whether the man hath, or hath not any thing else, it is all one, he can still say and sing with the prophet, *Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation*, Hab. iii. 18. and with the blessed Virgin, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, my heart rejoiceth in God my Saviour*. For as all are apt to praise and magnify those they love, much more they who truly love God, are always magnifying and praising him, and never think they can do enough; as really they never can.

AND as all men desire to be loved by those they love; so they who love God above all things, desire above all things to be belov'd of him: Which that they may, they strive all they can to please him: And seeing they can never do that without doing what he would have them, therefore they make it their chief care to walk *in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*; particularly, such as require them to love their neighbours, and to do good to all men, especially to such as are of the household of faith: Without which, they have no ground to pretend any love to God: for if a man say, *I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar*. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, *That he who loveth God, love his brother also*, 1 John iv. 20, 21. Indeed, all that truly love God, cannot chuse but love those who are made in his image and likeness; as all men are. But love is the fulfilling of the law, as the apostle saith, *Rom. xiii. 10*. And Christ himself here saith, *That all the law and the prophets hang upon these two, even for a man to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself*, Mat. xxii. 40. Seeing therefore they who love God, cannot chuse but love their neighbour for his sake; and seeing they who love God and their neighbour, will keep the whole law; there

therefore all who do not make it their constant duty to keep the whole law of God, may be confident they do not love him: But they who do so, need not doubt of their love to him. For he himself assureth them of it, saying, *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*, John xiv. 21. Such a one shews that he loves God with all his heart, seeing his whole heart is set to keep his commandments, and to do all such things as please him; notwithstanding all the temptations and allurements that he meets with to the contrary: which he could not do, if he did not love God above all things else, as all must do, that would love him with all their hearts.

AND if we enquire into the reasons of this the *first* and *great* commandment, they also are so great, that they command us to keep it in the *first* place. Neither need we go from the command itself to search for them: For we are here commanded, *first*, to love him as he is the Lord; *Thou shalt love the Lord, Jehovah*. But as such, he is the chiefest, or rather the only good in the world: As our blessed Saviour himself saith, *There is none good but one, that is God*, Matth. xix. 17. There is none essentially, none originally, none infinitely good, but he. Goodness is his very essence, so that he is not only good, but goodness itself, in and of himself, and the origin of all the goodness that is in any thing besides him. It all flows from him as from its fountain. I know there are many other good things in the world, yea, all things that he made are good, every thing in its kind. For when he had made the world, it is said, *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good*, Gen. i. 31. But it was he that made it so. Wherefore, seeing all the goodness or excellency there is in any, or all the creatures in the world, was put into them by *Jehovah*, the Almighty Creator of them, there is all the reason in the world that we should love him above them all; the sun more than the beams that proceed out of it, the fountain more than the streams that flow from it.

ESPECIALLY considering, that whatsoever goodness can be supposed to be in any particular creature, can be no more than a particular goodness, which may do us good in one respect, or upon one occasion, not upon all, as God doth. And all the goodness that is in all the creatures in the whole world, in that it is confined to them, it cannot be any more than a limited and finite goodness, and therefore cannot possibly be the proper and adequate object of our affections. For tho' we had all things that God hath made, we should still desire more; the desires of our souls being in a manner infinite: So that whatsoever we have besides God, our desires still run farther and farther *ad infinitum*, and can never rest or be satisfied but in an infinite good; such as none but God is. But he is such an infinite good, that there is nothing that our souls can desire but they may have it in him, and infinitely more. Wherefore, if we would govern our affections by the rules of right reason, seeing we love nothing but under the notion of good; we must love him most that is the greatest good: And seeing he is so infinitely better than all things else, that nothing can be truly termed good in comparison of him: we ought to love nothing at all in comparison of him. And whatsoever love we may pretend to have for him, we cannot be properly said to love him at all, any farther than as we love him above all things in the world besides.

THUS, if we contemplate only upon God's essential goodness, our reason cannot but dictate to us, that we ought to love him with all our hearts, for what he is in himself. But that nothing might be wanting to draw our whole hearts unto him, and to fix them entirely upon him, as he is infinitely good in himself, he hath been, and still is, as infinitely good to us. As I should now shew. But who is able to do that? Who can measure the height, the depth, the length and breadth of God's love to mankind? And to us also who least deserve it? The highest of our thoughts can never reach it. *Who then can express the noble acts of the Lord, or shew forth all his praise, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men?* It is impossible for tongue of men or angels to do it.

BUT altho' we cannot fully comprehend, much less express the greatness of God's love and goodness to us, yet if we do but cast our eye upon it, we may easily perceive so much of it, as will make us reflect and look upon ourselves as infinitely oblig'd to love him with all our hearts. And that we both may and ought to love him so for what he is to us, as well as for what he is in himself, appears from the command itself, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*: Not only as he is *the Lord*, but

likewise as he is *thy* God. And he hath manifested himself to be so, in such a wonderful manner, that we can never sufficiently adore and love him for it.

FOR as he is our God, every Person in the most sacred Trinity hath engag'd our affections to him by such expressions of his divine love to us, that if we had ten thousand hearts apiece, and lov'd him with them all, we could never love him enough; but should be still crying out with *David*, *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn also of my salvation, and my high tower*, Psa. xviii. 1. He is our all, therefore we will love him with all our hearts.

GOD the Father Almighty, he is our Maker, our Preserver, our daily, our continual Benefactor. It is in him we live, and move, and have our being. It is from him that we receive every good thing we have, and it is by him that we are preserved from every evil thing we have not. It is he that both makes and gives us our meat and drink, and causeth it to nourish, refresh, and strengthen our bodies, we know not how. It is he that prevents our falling into trouble, or else supports us under it, and delivers us out of it. It is he that protects us from the malice of our enemies, or turns their hearts, and makes them become our friends. Whatsoever kindness we receive from others, it is both the effect and token of his kindness to us, who hath the hearts of all men in his hands; and ours among the rest. It is by him that we think, understand, reason, and discern between good and evil, and chuse and love the one before the other. What infinite cause then have we to love him above all things, without whom we could neither have any thing to love, nor love any thing we have?

BUT in this, above all, was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, 1 John iv. 9, 10. He sent his Son, his only-begotten Son, begotten of himself, so that he also is the one living and true God. For hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, 1 John iii. 16. God laid down his life, he laid it down for us: Which is such an abyss of love, that the angels desire to look into it, but can never see to the bottom of it. How well then may we stand still and wonder? We, to whom this incomprehensible, this infinite, this divine love was shewn, what can we do less, than throw our hearts all in a flame at the feet of him that hath shewn it to us?

THAT the Lord God Omnipotent, who reigns over the universal world, that he should take upon him our flesh, that he who made man in the likeness of himself, should himself be made in the likeness of men; and that he, as such, should become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and all to redeem us from it, by expiating the sins which we have committed against himself! How can we think of this, and our hearts not burn within us? Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends, John xv. 13. But behold infinitely greater love than any mere man can shew; for God himself laid down his life, and he laid it down, not for his friends, but for his enemies, and all that they might become his friends, and love him with all their hearts. And shall we not do it after all? God forbid!

GOD forbid, but that we should love him above all the good things we have, seeing it is by him only that any good thing we have is good for us. For upon our fall from the state in which God made us, the whole earth and all things upon it, are cursed to us; and nothing can do us good, so long as he who made and governs all things is displeased with us. But Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. And so hath restored us to the favour of God, and keeps us in it, upon our believing and trusting upon him for it.

FOR he, the eternal Son of God, having taken upon him the nature of man in general, and united it to his own divine Person, and then offer'd it up as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, by dying in their stead, he in the same nature went up to heaven, and hath been ever since, and now is there at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, ever living to make intercession for those who come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 25. And it is only by means of this intercession which he is continually making for us, that Almighty God is reconciled to us, and hath mercy upon us; that he pardons our offences, and accounts us righteous; that he accepts

of our sincere endeavours to serve him, notwithstanding our manifold imperfections; that he looks upon us as his children, and provides accordingly for us; that he preserves us from danger and mischief, and gives us all things necessary both for life and godliness: So that as the light and heat that we have upon earth proceeds from the sun in the firmament; so all the blessings and favours we enjoy, come from the Son of righteousness shining continually in heaven, even from the eternal Son of God, our only Mediator and Advocate with the Father: *Whom therefore having not seen, we love; in whom, tho' now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,* 1 Pet. i. 8. And well might the apostle say, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran Atha,* 1 Cor. xvi. 22. that is, let him be curs'd in the highest degree that can be. For that man must needs be so, who loves not him that is the fountain of all blessing, without whom no man ever had, or can have one thing that is truly good for him: Whereas by him, there is nothing that can either make us, or do us good, but we may all have it abundantly.

By him the Holy Ghost himself, the greatest good that we are capable of, *is abundantly shed upon us,* Tit. iii. 5, 6. The Holy Ghost, the third Person in the most glorious Trinity, of one substance with the Father and the Son, he also doth not only come in a special manner to us, but rests upon us, and abides continually with us, and in us, as a principle of another kind of light and life, far above what we have, or can have by nature. For by nature we have only senses to discern the things of this world, and reason to govern us in the use of them. As to the things of the other world, we can have no right perception, much less any relish of them but by the Holy Spirit of God, revealing them to us in his word, and assisting us in apprehending and affecting of them. It is he that enlightens our minds, to see the things that belong to our everlasting peace, and opens our hearts to receive them. It is he that directs us what to do, and assists us in doing what is required, in order to our obtaining of them. It is he that informs our judgments, that purifies our hearts, that awakens our consciences, that brings our passions into order, and keeps them in it. In short, it is the Holy Spirit of God that makes us holy and spiritual, like in our capacities to himself, partakers of his divine nature; working in us both to will and to do what God would have us, in such a manner as plainly shews it to be supernatural and divine; the work of God himself: Who expects no more, and we can do no less than love him for it. And the more we love him, the more we are bound to do it; that also being the effect of his love to us. So that turn our eyes which way we will, either to the good we have, or to the good we do, they still bring us in fresh matter to fill our hearts with love to God, so as to leave no room for any thing else to enter. But the more we think of him, the more we love him, the more we may, and the more we ought, as we are here commanded, *to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our mind.* This our Lord here saith *is the first and great commandment.* It is the *first*, being the same in effect with that, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.* For what a man loves most, that is his God: And therefore he that loves any thing more than Almighty God, hath another God before him. It is the *first* in practice; for all true obedience being grounded upon true love to God, he that doth not *first* love God *with all his heart*, can obey none of his commandments as he ought to do it. It is the *first* in dignity: It is more than all whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices, more than all the other services we can do for God; so that all other signify nothing without this: Which is therefore also the great commandment; the greatest of all: all the rest resolving themselves into this, and meeting at last in it. He that doth not love God with all his heart, can keep none of his commandments: He that doth, will keep them all to the utmost of his power. And where he is deficient, this makes it up. This covers a multitude of faults. This adorns and sets off all we do, and puts such a gloss upon it, that altho it be not perfect in itself, yet it is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And therefore it may be well called, as it is here by him that made the *whole Law*, the *first* and *great commandment* in it.

THESE things being thus premised, let me now bespeak your love for the Lord your God: not such a love as you have for other things, but that which is due to him above all things else; so as to love him *with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind*, with the purest, the strongest, the highest love, that your

your heart, your soul, or your mind is capable of at the utmost stretch. And never fear any excess in it, for it can have only one extreme, and that is defect. So that ye may lay it down as a certain rule, that ye cannot love the world too little, nor God too much. And seeing you can never love him more than ye ought, you ought to love him as much as you can : So far at least as to prefer him before all things else that you can think of or desire : Then, and not till then, you may be truly said to love him.

BUT could we once do that, what an excellent people should we then be ? How soberly, how righteously, how godly should we then live ? The commandments of God would not then seem grievous but pleasant to us ; because they are his whom our souls love. If this sacred fire was once kindled in our breasts, it would soon inflame our hearts with such zeal for God, that we should be never easy in our own minds, but whilst we are labouring to promote his glory. We should then account it our only wisdom to know him, our only pleasure to please him, and the only honour we can ever have, to honour and glorify him in the world. We should then despise this world and live above it. Nothing here below could molest or trouble us. For our love being placed upon God above all things else, all things else would seem as nothing to us. But whatsoever happens, our thoughts would still be running after him, and our spirits rejoicing in him, and pleased with every thing that he doth.

AND how happy should we then be ! As happy as God himself can make us. For he loves them, who love him, and makes all things else to do so, or at least to be as good to them as if they did. He gives his angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways : So that wheresoever they are, they have a guard of the heavenly host about them, and the Lord of hosts himself at the head of it. The Holy Spirit of God directs and assists them in what they do, and then blesses and sanctifies it to their good : Yea, *all things work together for good to them who love God*, Rom. viii. 28. So that nothing can happen in this world, but they are sure to be some way or other the better for it. And how happy they will be in the next, we are not able as yet to conceive. For as it is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. And therefore I shall say no more of it, but pray to God that we may all be in the number of those who love him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



S E R M O N CXV.

The Great Happiness of Loving God.

R O M. viii. 28.

And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

IT is the wise man's observation, That *no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them: All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: As is the good, so is the sinner, and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath,* Eccles. ix. 1, 2. The same is confirm'd by the common experience of all mankind: Go where ye will, ye may with him also see under the sun, that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill: But time and chance happeneth to them all,* ver. 11. and to all alike. Almighty God seemeth to scatter, as it were, the things of this world among the good and bad promiscuously, without any regard to virtue or vice; but that some of both sorts may get more, some less, some little or nothing, according as it happens. Be sure there is no judging of what a man is, by what he hath: You can never know a wise man from a fool, a Christian from an infidel, a saint from a sinner, by his living in a palace or in a cottage, by his being cloathed with robes or with rags, by his being rich or poor, healthful or sickly, in honour or disgrace, or by any outward circumstance whatsoever. If there be any difference, the advantage seems mostly to lie on the side of vice and folly; the worst men having usually the most, and the best men the fewest of the good things, as they are call'd, here below; as we read in the gospel, the wicked rich man *was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day,* while honest poor *Lazarus was laid at his gate full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table,* Luke xvi. 19, 20. So it is at this day; a Jew, a Turk, or if there be such a monster in nature, an Atheist, or which is much the same, a Deist, may thrive, and prosper, and flourish in the world, living in great ease, and plenty, and reputation among his neighbours, while such as live in the true faith and fear of God, are destitute, afflicted, tormented, despised by all that are about them; or, at least, are in much worse condition as to outward appearance, than the other: I say, as to outward appearance; for if ye look into the inside of things, you will see it to be quite otherwise; for after all, tho' wicked, profane, and irreligious people may abound for a while in the riches, and pleasures, and honours of this world, and therefore may look big, and swagger, and conceit themselves to be happy, and may be esteemed so by others also as wise as themselves, yet all this while their condition is as bad as bad can be, on this side hell; for living in sin, they are under the displeasure and curse of Almighty God; so that all the fine things they so much boast of, are accursed to them,

and serve only to enhance their reckoning, and increase their torment another day. Their ease is only a snare to them, and their wealth an occasion of stumbling: Their ease makes them secure, their honours proud, their strength presumptuous, and their plenty in this world puts all thoughts of the next out of their minds; so that they sail on, as they think, with a prosperous gale, till on a sudden they are engulph'd, and swallow'd up in the abyss of eternal misery, which they never thought of before. Thus all their seeming blessings are so many real curses to them, and contribute sometimes to their fears, and cares, and troubles in this life, and always to their greater misery and torment in that which is to come.

NEITHER do only the things which they themselves enjoy, but all things else conspire their ruin: For he who made and governs all things, being incensed against them, nothing be sure can do them good, but every thing acting and moving only under him, must needs run cross to them, and some way or other concur to execute his wrath and displeasure upon them. So that howsoever they may flatter themselves with what they seem to have at present, as it is impossible for them to receive any real happiness and satisfaction from it here, so it is impossible for them to escape everlasting destruction *from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*, except they repent, and turn to him while they are in the body.

But if they do that, if they turn to God, so as to love and honour him, the case will be alter'd with them, so as to become just contrary to what it was before: Before, all things wrought together for evil, but now all things shall work together for good to them. This we may be confident of, for so the apostle himself was, when inspir'd by the infallible Spirit of God, saying, not only, we think, or suppose, or hope, but *we know*, we are sure, *that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose*; who therefore are not only much happier than the other are, howsoever they may appear to the world, but they are the only happy people that are in it.

BUT this being a matter wherein we are all so nearly concern'd, it behoves us to look a little more narrowly into it, that we may get as clear a notion of it as we can: For which purpose, it will be necessary to consider,

I. WHO they are who are here said *to love God*, and to be *called according to his purpose*; that we may know whether we be in the number of them, and strive all we can to be so.

II. WHAT kind of *good* that is, for which all things are here said *to work, to them who so love God*.

III. How all things work together for their good.

IV. WHAT ground we have to believe they do so.

First THEREFORE, by those who are here said *to love God*, and to be *called according to his purpose*, we are to understand, such as being regenerate of God's Holy Spirit, and so made his children by adoption and grace, have their minds wholly bent and inclin'd toward him, so as really to love and prefer him that made all things before all things that he hath made; and so *are called out of darkness into his marvellous light*, and that too, *according to his purpose*, or, as it is in the original, *κατὰ πρόθεσιν*, *according to purpose*, effectually, or, as we say, *to purpose*, so as to come in upon their being call'd, and to answer the end of it, by *cleaving unto the Lord with purpose of heart*, Acts xi. 23. and making it their constant business to keep his commandments, to serve and glorify him, and to finish the work which he hath given them to do. *He that hath my commandments, saith he, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*, John xiv. 21. Whatsoever people may pretend, he doth not look upon them as having any real love for him, unless they know his will and do it: But as many as do that, he reckons them in the number of his friends, his servants, his children, his elect, his saints, his peculiar people: And accordingly he takes particular care of them, and manifesteth his special love and favour to them, by ordering all things so as may tend most to their benefit and advantage; so that *all things*, as the apostle here saith, *work together for good to them*.

FOR *good*: Not for this or that particular *good*, but for *good* in general; nor for that which may only seem good in their own, or other people's eyes, but that which is good for them in the judgment of God himself, and by consequence for their real, spiritual, and eternal good: For whatsoever can any way conduce to their
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being and doing good while they are upon earth, to the making of them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and so to the bringing of them at last to the actual possession of it. That this is properly the good for which all things work together to them who are so call'd, appears from the reason which the apostle gives of it in the words following my text, saying, *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified,* Rom. viii. 29, 30. This is the end, the top of this golden chain of all secondary causes working together for good to them who love God, that they may be glorified with him for ever; which is the greatest, or rather the only good they can ever have, and all they are capable of. For this good therefore it is, that all things work together for them while they are in this world, even that when they go out of it, they may be eternally happy in the enjoyment of the chiefest good. Whatsoever doth not conduce to this end, can do them no good at all; they had as good, if not much better, be without it than have it: But whatsoever can any way contribute towards their obtaining of this good, is really good for them; and therefore all things concur, or work together to bring it about. If riches will thus do them good, all things shall concur to make them rich: If poverty, all things shall concur to keep them poor: If it be good for them to be healthful and strong, all things shall concur to prevent sickness: If it be better to be sick or weak, all things shall concur to impair their health; and so in every thing else that can be named. So that every thing that happens, happens well for them, the best that can be; in that it helps either to the subduing of some vice in them, or to the regulating of some passion, or to the breaking an ill custom, or to the preventing some occasion of falling into sin or mischief, or to the diverting some temptation, or to the arming them against it; or to the making them more watchful over themselves; or to the exercising some virtue in them; or to the putting them in mind of their duty, or to the keeping them close to it; or to the giving them an opportunity of doing some good, which otherwise they could not do; or else to their growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and so to the fitting them better to serve God here, and to live with him hereafter. Whatsoever conduceth to these and such like ends, is truly good for them; and therefore all things concur to effect it. They may be sure of it, for they have the word of God himself for it, assuring them here by his apostle, *That all things work together for their good.*

How all things thus work together for it, is the next question to be consider'd; not that we can dive into the secrets of Providence, and see the wonderful series and concatenation of second causes, the dependence and influence of one upon another, and how every one contributes its share to the producing of such an effect: For these things are hid from us, or rather, they are beyond the reach of our understandings; and therefore it would be presumption in us, to offer at the explication of them. It is sufficient for us to observe, that it is not any one thing by itself that doth it, not only some, or many, but all things work together to effect it: as in a physical confection or composition, made up of many ingredients of several qualities, some hot and some cold, some dry and some moist, some lenitive and some astringent, and the like, all mix'd together; altho no one of these ingredients could do any good, but some perhaps, without the other, might do hurt, yet being all mix'd together by a skilful hand, they may effect the cure for which they were design'd: So here, it is not any one or more particular providences that produce so much good to those who love God, but all together, correcting, influencing, and assisting one another, until they have produced it. So that altho no one thing can do it, yet if any thing was wanting, it would not be done, every thing conducing in its kind some way or other towards it: And so all things work together among themselves, and all with God, or rather under him, as the first cause and mover of them, who manageth and orders them, so as to make them *work together for good to them that love him.*

WHAT ground we have to believe they do so, is the last and chief question to be resolved; but they who believe the scripture to be given by inspiration of God, can make no question of it, it being so expressly affirm'd in my text, as a thing most certain and notorious. *We know,* saith the apostle, by divine inspiration, *that*

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all things work together for good to them that love God. The same necessarily follows also from many other places of holy scripture; as where it is said, *That no evil shall befall such,* Psal. xci. 10. for if no evil can befall them, whatsoever befalls them must be for their good; and where it is said, *That they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,* Psal. xxxiv. 10. for if all these things did not work together for their good, there might be some good thing which they might want; but that it seems by God's own word they cannot do: They cannot want any good thing; for indeed all things which are good, are theirs, as appears also from the apostle, who writing to those who were call'd at *Corinth*, saith, *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours,* 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. For if all things be theirs, all things must work together for their good, otherwise they could have no use or benefit of them, which, be sure, they always have: For as the same apostle saith, *They are as having nothing, and yet possessing all things,* 2 Cor. vi. 10. Tho they have no civil right to any thing, they have a divine right to, and an interest in all things that are, so as to possess and enjoy the benefit of them, by having them all working together for their good.

WHAT is thus positively asserted in God's holy word, hath been confirm'd also, and found true by the experience of his holy people in all ages. What more unlikely to do them good, than their suffering evil? Yet *David* could lay upon his own experience, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes,* Psal. cxix. 71. And *St. Paul*, *Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,* 2 Cor. iv. 17. What could be worse than for a man to be sold by his own brethren, carry'd a slave into a foreign country, and there put into a prison, as *Joseph* was? Yet all these things wrought together, to make him the second man in the kingdom of *Egypt*. Who could have imagin'd, that *Saul's* going to look for his father's asses, should be the way to be anointed king, 1 Sam. x. 1. that *Goliath's* defying the armies of *Israel* should contribute to *David's* being advanced to the throne, chap. xvii. 10. that *Job's* losing all he had, should be the means of his getting as much more, *Job* i. 3. and xlii. 12? There are many such instances, both in sacred and profane history, which shew how wonderfully all things, even the most improbable, and such also as seem to look just contrary, yet turn about at last, and work together to produce some good effect; as none of us but may see also in ourselves, if we do but take notice of it. Nothing ever happened to any of us, but what was design'd for our good; and to those who truly love and trust in God, all things that happen, produce the good they were design'd for; insomuch that if any one thing had ever happen'd otherwise than it did, it would have been worse for them, if not their ruin. This every one may observe in many instances, if he doth but look back, and reflect upon what hath befallen him through the whole course of his past-by life. And tho we cannot as yet perceive in all, while we see only as through a *Glass darkly*, yet when we come to heaven, and there have the light of God's countenance shining continually upon us, by it we shall discover his goodness to us in every thing that fell out from our first coming into the world, to our going out again, and see how they all wrought together to bring us to that blessed place, that we may praise him for it, and enjoy the benefit of it for evermore.

BUT that we may be able also to give a reason of this hope that is in us, even that *all things work together for good to them that love God*, we must farther observe, that as this hope is grounded upon the infallible word of God, and strengthen'd by the constant experience of his people in all ages, so our very reason also may convince us of it, by demonstrating both that, and why it is so: Or to speak more plainly, both that *all things do work together*, and how it comes to pass, that they so *work together for good to those that love God, and are call'd according to his purpose*.

THAT they do so, may be sufficiently proved from this one argument: As there is no sort of people or nation, we know in the world, but have, at least, some general notions of another life after this, so they all agree, that they who are good and virtuous in this life, shall be happy in the other. This seems to be one of those common principles that are planted in our very nature, so that none that have the use of their reason can deny it, without offering violence to themselves; much less can any who profess themselves to be Christians doubt of it, it being so plainly revealed, and promised by Almighty God in the holy scripture, given by his inspiration. But if all things did not work together for good to such persons in

this world, so as to bring them at last to a state of happiness in the next, this could not be, or at least we could never be certain of it: For some things might so fall out, as to impede and hinder their attainment of happiness, notwithstanding all their goodness and virtue. We often see how a little accident overthrows a great design. And if it was in the power of any one thing to prejudice those who love God, so as to prevent their salvation, they might never be saved. And so the word and promise of God (which is impossible) would fail. And so it might too, if all things did not work together for their good, or in order to their salvation. For no one thing, except God, can do any thing of itself: But all secondary causes concur to the producing of every effect; much more, so great an effect, as the sanctification and salvation of mankind. So that if all things did not work together for it, it could never be effected. But we are sure that it is effected for all those who truly love God; and therefore conclude, that it is impossible, but that all things should work together for their good.

NEITHER is it difficult to shew, how they come to do so. For it is certain, that all who love God, are beloved of him; his love to them being the cause of theirs to him. *We love him, because he first loved us*, 1 John iv. 19. Indeed there is nothing more plainly revealed, or more frequently asserted in God's holy word, than that he hath a special love and kindness for them, who truly love and honour him. *He that hath my commandments, saith our Lord, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him*, John i. 21. *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God*, chap. xvi. 27. There are many expressions all over the bible to the same purpose, but I have instanced more particularly in these, because they shew, that God, as he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath a particular love for those who love him, and are effectually called by him. From whence it necessarily follows, that all things must work together for their good, and that they do so by reason of God's love and favour to them. For he being the first cause, the supreme director and governour of all things that are, so that they all act and move only under him, and according to his will and pleasure; therefore all things work together for good to those who love him, because he loves them, and it is his good will and pleasure they should do so: For nothing can resist his will; but all things work and move just as he would have them, and therefore must needs work together for good to them whom he loves, for that reason, because it is his will they should; or, which is in effect the same, because he hath a good will or love for them, and therefore orders and determines the influences and operations of all things under him, so as to make them concur and co-operate for their good and benefit: As we see also in the troubles and afflictions which befall such persons: For it is expressly said, *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*, Heb. xii. 6. And, *as many as I love, saith he, I rebuke and chasten*, Rev. iii. 19. Which shews, that it is from his love to them, that any trouble or chastisement falls upon them. But that also is for their good, the greatest good they are capable of, even that *they may be partakers of his holiness*, Heb. xii. 10. that they may be sanctified or made holy, *as he who hath called them is holy*; and so be meet to live with him in the other world. And what greater good can they ever desire? Yet this is the happy effect of the very chastisements which God is pleased to lay upon those who love him, and which he is therefore pleased to lay upon them, because he loves them. So it is in all things else: *All things work together for good to those who love God*, because he loves them, and therefore disposeth of all things so as to make them do it.

BUT how can this be? Altho there be many doubtless upon earth that truly love God, and are accordingly loved by him; yet their love to him is far short of what he deserves from them; it is expressed but very imperfectly, and there is not the best of them but do many things offensive to his divine goodness, and provoking to the eyes of his glory. How comes it then to pass, that notwithstanding all their imperfections and provocations, he still continues to love them, and to love them so, as to make all things serve them, and work together for their good? This is a great mystery, but it will be soon unfolded, if we do but consider, that all who truly love God, believe also in our Lord Jesus Christ. For it is *faith that works by love*. So that no man can have any true love for God without true faith in Christ; such a faith, whereby he is united to him, made a member of his body,

and so partakes of his Holy Spirit. But for all who are thus nearly related to him upon earth, Christ is always interceding in heaven: *He appears there in the presence of God for them*, Heb. ix. 24. *as the Mediator between him and them*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. making up all differences that may happen: He is their Advocate with the Father, to plead their cause, and bring them off upon all occasions; as he may well do, *seeing he is a propitiation for their sins, and for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 1, 2. and is therefore *able to save to the utmost those who come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25.

AND hence it is, that they who love God, notwithstanding all their failures and imperfections, still continue in his love and favour, so as to have all things work together for their good, even because his Son, their Saviour Christ, is continually interceding with him for them: who himself also having *all things put under his feet, and being made the head over all things for his church, which is his body*, Ephes. i. 22, 23. he takes particular care, that *all things should work together for good to them who love God*; they being all real members of his said body. This is the great work that he is continually doing in heaven. *My Father, saith he, worketh hitherto, and I work*, John v. 17. As God the Father is continually ordering all things, so as to make them work together for the good of the whole creation; so God the Son is continually ordering all things, so as to make them work together for the good of his church, and all the sound members of it; that they may not fail of that inheritance which he hath purchased for them with his own blood, and so it may not be spilt in vain: Which therefore is another great reason, why all things conspire in so wonderful a manner to do them good.

To which we may add, That as God the Father, and God the Son, so likewise God the Holy Ghost that proceeds from both, co-operates with them in all things to bring about and accomplish the same most gracious design; not only by moving upon all things, as he did at first upon the waters, to bring them into such an order of working together, as may tend most to that end; but also by moving upon those that love God, so as to enable them to get some good or other by all things that happen: So that howsoever things work together, they by his assistance are the better for it. We have a famous instance of this in St. Paul, *I have learned, saith he, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: Every where, and in all things I am instructed; both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13. For here we see, that he being strengthened and assisted by the Spirit of Christ, nothing could come amiss to him. He was ready for all occurrences alike; wealth and poverty, honour and disgrace, fulness and want, was the same thing to him. He was in all things instructed, having learn'd to use and improve every condition, so as to be the better for it, and therefore contented with it, and satisfied, that it was the best he could be in at that time: Insomuch that he could say upon his own experience, That the very afflictions he met with, *wrought out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 18. And in my text, That *all things work together for good to them who love God*, as he did: Such a mighty force had the Spirit of Christ upon him.

AND so it hath upon all that love God, as well as upon him. For being all acted and governed by the same Holy Spirit, by him they are taught, directed and enabled to pick some good or other out of every dispensation of divine Providence, and turn it to their own advantage, for which it was design'd. They by his divine power can extract good out of evil, and work their own salvation out of the same things which other people abuse to their eternal ruin and destruction. So that as all things else work together for their good, so they themselves also work together with all things else, to make them attain their end, in being really good for them.

If they be rich and great in the world, they lay hold of the opportunities which God hath put into their hands, to *do good in the world, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and so to lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life*, 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. If they be poor, and all things concur to make them so, it is to preserve them from the snares and temptations of the world, to keep them meek, and humble, and poor in spirit; to make them rich in faith, and hope, and trust on God; to put them out of love with this world, and to make them long for the other,

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where they shall have as much as the best of them, and infinitely more than any can have in this. And they accordingly make use of their low condition, and improve it to such good ends and purposes.

If they enjoy health and strength of mind and body, they employ it wholly in his service who gives it to them. If they are sick and weak, the sense of their weakness adds strength to their faith, and seriousness to their repentance, and puts them upon daily expectation of, and preparation for their great change.

If they marry, and have a meet help, a suitable companion, their hearts are lifted up with thankfulness to God for it, and they strive all they can to help one another forward in the way to heaven, that they may live together there as well as here. If it be otherwise, they are patient and submissive; they learn to live above this vain and wicked world, and seek for comfort in heaven, seeing they can find none upon earth.

If they have children, they do all they can to answer God's end in giving them, by bringing them up in his nurture and admonition, that they may serve and glorify him in the world. If they have none, they have less care upon them for the things of this life, and therefore take more care of that which is to come.

If their children are good and dutiful, they live with a constant sense of God's special favour to them. If after all, they prove wicked and undutiful, it puts them in mind how undutiful they themselves have been to their heavenly Father, and so keeps them humble and penitent for their former sins, and more careful to perform their duty to him, as they desire their children should perform theirs to them.

If they have any true friends, they thank God for them, and make use of their friendship, as a means whereby to do good to them, as well as receive any kindness from them. If they have enemies, they take that occasion to shew their love to Christ, by loving them in obedience to his command.

If they live in the midst of wars and tumults, they always stand upon their watch, that they may not be surprized with sudden death, but ready for it whensoever it shall come. If all things are quiet about them, they can more freely serve God, and do good in the world; and accordingly make it their business to do so.

If they are advanced to honour in this world, they find by experience the vanity of that, and therefore seek more diligently for the honour that cometh from God only. If they live in disgrace and contempt among their neighbours, it makes them more sensible of their own vileness, and teacheth them to have their conversation more in heaven, where only true honour is to be had.

If they thrive and gain much in the world by their calling, or friends, or any other lawful way, they look upon it as coming from God, and put into their hands for his use and service, and therefore employ it accordingly. If they meet with losses and disappointments, they look upon them also as sent from God, and design'd for their good; and therefore contrive all ways whereby to get good, and grow better by them: So that in both respects they can truly say with *Job*, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*, Job i. 21.

Thus we might run through all conditions of life, and all occurrences that can ever happen to any man upon earth, and shew how they who love God, by the assistance of his Holy Spirit, use and improve them, so as to receive great benefit and advantage from all and every one of them. And then it is no wonder that *all things work together for good to those who love God, and are called according to his purpose*; seeing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and likewise the communion or fellowship of the Holy Ghost is always with them.

If people would seriously reflect upon these things, and keep them always fresh in their minds, they would need no other argument to persuade them to call in for their affections from all things else, and fix them wholly upon God, so as to devote themselves to his service, and make it their constant care and study to please, honour, and obey him. For what course can ye ever take, whereby to get so much as ye may by this means? By your moiling and toiling in the world, ye may perhaps, and but perhaps, get something that looks like wealth and honour in the eyes of deluded mortals: But besides that, there is nothing at the bottom of it, but vanity and vexation of spirit; so that you will not be one jot the wiser or better for it, when you have it, if not much worse. Besides that, I say, you can never expect to get all things, but only something, and some of the things only which are upon earth, which altogether bear no proportion to all that

is in the world: Whereas, by exercising yourselves continually in the service of God, by fasting and praying, and hearing God's holy word, and partaking of his body and blood, you may have *the thoughts of your hearts cleansed by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, so as perfectly to love him, and worthily magnify his holy name.* And then all things in the world will be yours, and work together, as ye have now heard, for your good. Then you'll be rich indeed, as rich as all the world, and he that made it too, can make you. And yet there is never a one here present, but may become thus rich, so as to have all things at his service, if he will but set himself in good earnest upon looking after it. Which therefore I heartily wish you would all do, as you tender your own good and welfare. And if any have done it already, as I hope some have, I as heartily wish them joy of that prodigious estate they are now possessed of. Whatsoever you have, or have not upon earth, it is all one: For all things are yours; what ye have not, as well as what ye have, always working together for your good. Ye cannot doubt of it: For he that made and disposeth of all things in the world, hath here assured you of it. He hath already settled them all upon you, that they may do you all the good ye are capable of in this world: And in the next you'll *inherit all things*, Rev. xxi. 7. and so be as happy as it is possible for you to be, through Christ our Lord.



S E R M O N CXVI.

The Easiness of Christ's Yoke.

M A T. xi. 28.

Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

MAN being at first design'd for the constant service, and immediate worship of Almighty God, he was therefore so compos'd, and made of such a temper and constitution, that he can be no way happy, but only by doing the work he was made for: Being so exactly fitted for it, that he is always out of tune, restless and unquiet, but whilst he is wholly employed about it. Hence all men being naturally desirous of happiness, they cannot but offer at something like to religion, or the worshipping of God: and howsoever they perform it, they still find something of rest and satisfaction within themselves, arising from the apprehensions that they have done their duty, and paid their homage to him that made them. So that it seems to be agreed upon, on all hands, that it is our interest to be religious. The great question is, What it is to be so? A question which mankind could never yet agree in; as appears from the many and diverse religions that always have been and still are professed in the world. And whatsoever religion it is that any man professeth, be sure he thinks that to be the right, and therefore expects happiness and comfort from it, otherwise he would not profess it.

HENCE, therefore, although there be many things which highly commend the Christian before all other religions to us, as the purity of its precepts, the excellency of its doctrine, the strictness of its discipline, and the testimony which God himself hath given to it, by many and real miracles, wherein it far exceeds all others; yet that which should principally draw us to it, and confirm us in it, is the certainty of those principles which it doth propound, whereupon to trust for happiness and salvation; for hereby it gives that rest and quiet to the soul, which religion in general aims at, and none but itself can assure us of, or bring us to. And therefore it is that our blessed Saviour makes use of this as the principal reason, wherefore we should embrace that religion which he hath established in the world, because in it we may find rest to our souls; *Come to me, saith he, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon ye, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls.*

WHERE we may observe, by the way, how far our blessed Saviour exceeds not only the heathen idols, together with *Mahomet* and his pretended angel, but even *Moses* and the prophets too, in that he doth not call upon us, as they do, to turn unto the Lord, but to come to him. And as he never ushers in his words as the prophets do, by saying, *Thus saith the Lord*, but, *Thus say I, Verily, verily, I say unto you*; so neither doth he promise, as they do, That if we hearken to him, *the Lord will give us rest*, but that he himself will do it; *and I will give you rest.* The reason of all which is clear, even because he that spake these words was himself that Lord of hosts, to whom we ought to come, as to the only center wherein our souls can rest, *God blessed for evermore.*

WHICH I therefore observe, because it should make us the more inquisitive into the true sense and purport of these words; for seeing they are not the words of our

fellow-creature, but of our great Creator, the supreme Being and Governour of the world; we that were made by him and depend continually upon him, cannot surely but be very desirous to know his divine will and pleasure in them; especially considering that these words contain the sum and substance of the whole gospel, even whatsoever is either required of us, or promised to us by him, who came from heaven to earth, on purpose to make way for us to go from earth to heaven.

WHEREFORE, that we may understand our Lord's meaning aright, we shall consider,

I. WHO they are whom he here calls by the name of those *that labour and are heavy laden*.

II. WHAT he would have them do, saying, *Come to me*.

III. WHAT he here promiseth to them that do so, in these words, *And I will give you rest*.

I. HE calls all such, and only such as are *κοπιῶντες ἢ πεφορτισμένοι*, that so labour as to be weary of the work, and heavy laden with the burden of their sins. He calls only such, because he knows none else will come unto him: For they who are so wedded to their lusts, that they are loth to be divorced from them, and therefore labour, not to subdue, but to cherish them; they that think not their sins to be a burden, but a pleasure, and therefore care not to be eased of them; yea, and all they too that fancy not their crimes to be so great, but that God will pardon them without a Saviour, or at least hope the good works they sometimes seem to do, will make him amends for all the bad ones they ever did: All such think they have no need of Christ, and therefore they will never come unto him. But Christ, be sure, hath less need of them, and therefore he doth not so much as call them.

BUT as for others, whether they be high or low, bond or free, Jew or Gentile, he invites them all that *labour and are heavy laden*. Where, by labouring, we are to understand, as the Greek word imports, such as so labour as to be weary of working: Weary, not in a carnal, but in a spiritual sense; not in body, but in mind; that are weary of their sins, and heartily desirous to be freed from them: That labour so much under the sense of their natural averseness to God and goodness, and their impetuous inclinations to sin and vanity, that they know not what to do with themselves, but are often forced to cry out in the bitterness of their souls, as St. Paul did, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death that is with me?* Rom. vii. 24.

AND they who are thus *weary* of their present lusts, cannot but be *heavy laden* too with the pressure of their former impieties, the remembrance thereof being so grievous to them, the burden so intollerable, that they are scarce able to bear it any longer, but are ready, each moment, to sink under it, and to fall down into horror and despair. Thus it was with David, when he cried out, *Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me*, Psal. xxxviii. 4. Thus it must be with those whom Christ here calls unto him, and thus it must be with us, if ever we desire to receive any benefit or advantage from him.

AND, verily, I hope we all here present are, I am certain, we have all but too much cause to be thus qualify'd for our coming unto Christ. But that we may be sure to be so for the future, let us recollect ourselves a little, and consider, how many and great our sins have been; and what we have deserv'd by them; But alas! who is able to do that? Who can understand his errors? or tell, how oft he hath offended? We may as well undertake to count the stars of heaven, or number the sands upon the sea-shore, to fathom the depth of the sea, or reckon up the hairs of our head, as ever compute the many sins and failings we have been guilty of. And this might justly make our hearts even fail within us, as it did David's, that our sins have been so many, our transgressions innumerable.

ESPECIALLY if we consider the greatness, as well as the multitude of our sins, that they are not only so many that they cannot be number'd, but so great too that they can never be weigh'd by us, being all committed against the clearest light, the

greatest

greatest love, and strictest vows, and the highest obligations to the contrary, that ever the sins of mortals were.

AND if to all this we consider the just desert of every sin, we cannot surely but labour very much under the heavy load of those many and great ones that lie upon us. For what have our sins deserv'd? or rather, What have they not deserv'd? seeing death it self is the wages thereof, which from the beginning was entail'd upon sin, as sin, and by consequence upon all sin, one as well as another; death temporal, death spiritual, and death eternal: Under which are comprehended all the miseries which our natures are capable of, or our persons can ever be obnoxious to. Even in this life our sins deprive us of many and great blessings, which otherwise we should enjoy; and bring upon us as many and great troubles, which otherwise we should be free from. Whatsoever pains or aches in our bodies, whatsoever cares or perplexities in our minds, whatsoever griefs or sorrows in our hearts, whatsoever losses or crosses in our estates, relations or designs, we ever either felt or fear, we must impute them all to those sins, which we, ungrateful creatures, have committed against him that made and governs the world.

YET these temporal are nothing in comparison of those spiritual and eternal miseries which our sins have made us subject to; for by reason of them the Lord of hosts himself is angry with us; he that made us is incensed against us, and become our enemy. And what shall we do, when he shall rise up to take vengeance of us, for affronting his Majesty, despising his threats, abusing his mercies, and transgressing his righteous and just commands, as we have done? Can we resist his power, or avoid the strokes of his provoked justice? Shall we be able to *dwell with everlasting burnings*, or endure the flames of a consuming fire? Yes, this is the sad condition our sins have brought us all into. We all, at this moment, stand upon the brink of the bottomless pit, and know not but the next step we take may be into it. And if God should, as he justly may, cause us all to drop from the place where we sit or stand, down into the abyss of misery, how strangely should we be surpris'd to find ourselves surrounded, on a sudden, with those infernal flames? What horror and confusion, what astonishment and consternation should we soon be in, to see ourselves amongst the fiends of hell, and to feel the torments of that damn'd crew? To behold omnipotence, glory, majesty, justice, yea, and mercy too, setting itself against us, while we lie scorching in the fiery furnace of incensed wrath and indignation.

BUT this is too sad and doleful a subject to insist on long; neither should I have mention'd it at all, but only to prepare you the better to accept the motion which your Saviour himself here makes unto you, of coming unto him. For the premises being duly weigh'd, you cannot but look upon your condition as desperate, your misery as unavoidable, unless there be some way or other found out whereby to have your sins pardoned, and your hearts for the future eas'd of them. But give me leave to tell you, in the name of our Lord and Master Christ, that he is ready to do it for you, if you will but come unto him. And that you might not at all doubt of it, he hath given you his own word for it, and hath left it upon record for all generations to read and observe; saying, *Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

BUT then you'll say, What doth he mean by coming to him? Why! for that, lest you should be mistaken in it, he himself hath elsewhere told you what he means by it, saying, *He that cometh to me shall never hunger, he that believeth in me shall never thirst*, John vi. 35. From whence it is plain, that by coming to him he meaneth neither more nor less than believing in him.

BUT then the question returns, What is it to believe in Christ? A question, I confess, of very great importance; forasmuch as the whole tenor of the gospel lays the main stress of our salvation upon our believing aright: And therefore in speaking to it, I shall not discourage your attention with any impertinent distinctions or nice speculations about it; much less shall I trouble you with any new notions or private opinions of it; but shall give you the sense of our church concerning it, which in the homily of faith, speaking of a quick and lively faith, such as the gospel requires, saith, *This is not only the common belief of the articles of our faith, but it is also a true trust and confidence of the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and a stedfast hope of all good things to be received at God's hand.* And elsewhere it saith, *The right and true Christian faith is not only to believe that the holy*
scripture,

scripture, and all the articles of our faith are true; but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. Which definition of our church is not only agreeable to the notion of faith, receiv'd by the catholick or universal church in all ages, since the apostles days; but it is the same in effect with that description which the apostle himself gives of it, saying, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. ii. 1. which words contain not only an encomium, as some have thought, but a plain description of faith, as it respects both the promises made and the truths revealed by the most high God. In the first respect, it is *the substance of things hoped for*, in the other, *the evidence of things not seen*.

For whereas there be some things recorded as done heretofore, other things foretold to come to pass hereafter, and many great mysteries revealed and attested by God in the holy scriptures; such things as these are, although they appear neither to our sense nor our understanding; yet having the testimony of God, the supreme truth himself, for them; faith is a clear evidence and demonstration of them: that is, by faith we are as fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of them, as if our eye saw, or our reason could comprehend them; yea, and much more too: For our senses may deceive us, and so may our reason also; but the eternal God is of that infinite wisdom, that he cannot be deceived himself, and of that infinite goodness, that it is as impossible for him to deceive us. So that there is nothing in the world that we can have so much reason to believe, as we have to believe whatsoever he saith.

WHEREFORE faith being grounded upon the testimony of God, therefore only believing what he saith, because he saith it, it cannot but possess the soul with a clearer light, a fuller evidence, and a greater certainty of the truths which it believes, than all the arguments and demonstrations in the world can do: It matters not the distance of time or place, nor the seeming impossibility of the thing propounded; it is sufficient that he who cannot lie hath said it, and therefore it cannot but believe it. By this faith it was, that *Abraham* saw Christ's day above two thousand years before it came, *John* viii. 56. By this we may now see Christ in heaven, with all his glorious saints, martyrs, and confessors about him, as plainly as if ourselves were there among them. By this I am as certain we shall all one day stand before Christ's tribunal, as I am that we are now in this place. And by this it is, that we are fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of all the articles of our Christian religion; because attested by Christ, by God himself; yet this is not all, that is required to the making up of a true and lively faith. For that, as our Church observes, consists not only in the believing all the articles of our Christian faith; but likewise in a sure trust and confidence on the merciful promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord: That is, in the apostle's words, *It is not only the evidence of things not seen, but likewise the substance of things hoped for*; which is therefore placed first, because principally to be considered.

For the understanding whereof, we must consider how that man having, by his fall from the chiefest good, forfeited his right and title to all things that are good for him; the eternal Son of God was pleased, with no less a price than his own blood, to redeem it for us again, so as to put us into a capacity of being actually restored to it. For upon the account of what he hath done, and suffered for us, God himself hath again promised all good things to us, which as they are good they cannot but be the object of our hope; and as they are promised by God, must needs be the object of our faith too; of that faith, which the apostle here says, *Is the substance of things hoped for*; that is, as the Syriack translation renders it, it is **ἡ οὐσία** a full persuasion of things which are in hope, as if they were in act. For faith **παραστάς**, as *Theodoret* words it; *representat*, as *St. Ambrose*; it *foreshows*, it paints to the life, and represents them all to us, as fully and clearly as if we had them before our eyes. Yea, by faith, as *St. Hierom* saith, we do already possess them. *St. Chrysostom* goes further, saying, *That faith doth not only cause the things we hope for to subsist in our hearts, ἀλλ' αὐτὴ ἐστὶν οὐσία αὐτῶν* but itself is the very essence or substance of them, realizing them as much unto us, as if we were already in the actual possession of them.

AND verily it can do no less: For if he be but an honest man that hath promised a kindness to us, we reckon our selves as certain of it, as if we already had it. How much more when God himself hath passed his word and made a promise to us? Certainly, in such a case, our faith should bear some proportion to the firmness and infallibility of the ground on which it is placed, so as to carry us above all doubts and diffidence whatsoever; as it did the Father of the faithful, *who staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory unto God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform*, Rom. iv. 20, 21. Such a faith had David, as we may observe all along in the *Psalms*; where it is called as it usually is in the old testament, *trusting or confiding in the Lord*. Such a faith should we have in all the promises of God: And that, notwithstanding they are made only to mankind in general; for so are all the commands too; yet every one is bound to obey them. So here, tho the promises of God be propounded only in general terms to mankind, and not to any particular person; yet every particular person is bound to believe and trust on them.

BUT here it is necessary to observe, that as our obedience should be of the same extent and latitude with God's commands; so should our faith be with his promises. We must not pick and chuse, take one and leave another. He that doth not believe all, believes none: For he hath the same ground to believe every one, as he hath to believe any of them. Only we must carefully distinguish betwixt the promises which are made of Godliness, and those which are made unto it; which, as the apostle saith, *bath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. The promises which are made of Godliness are absolute, the rest are all conditional. Of the first sort are these exceeding great and precious promises, which St. Peter speaks of, and saith, *That by them we are partakers of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. Such are the promises of the new covenant; as, That he will put his law in our hearts, and write it in our inward parts: That he will give us a new heart, and put a new spirit within us: That he will pour out his own Spirit upon us, and cause us to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments: In short, that he will give us grace to repent and turn to him. These promises are made absolutely by God, and therefore should be as absolutely believed by us.

BUT as for the promises of pardon and salvation, they are all made with this proviso or condition, that the former promises he first believ'd, and so made good to us; that we first repent, and then we shall be pardoned: First be holy, and then we shall be happy. And therefore no man can believe that God will pardon his sins, unless he repent, for he hath no such promise: God hath never said he would. But rather on the contrary, we are bound to believe that God will not pardon our sins, except we repent; because God hath said he will not. *Except ye repent*, saith he, *ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3. So that I have the same reason to believe that God will not pardon my sins except I do repent, as I have to believe he will pardon them if I do repent. Yea, and I have the same reason too to believe that God will give me repentance, that so my sins may be pardon'd, as I have to believe that my sins shall be pardoned when I have repented. For I have his promise of both.

HAVING therefore so many and great promises made to us by him, who is so infinitely just and faithful to his word, that he cannot falsify it, it cannot but be our duty to believe, and trust in them, in the highest manner that possibly we can. And unless we do so, we can never expect they should be performed to us. For this is absolutely required in order to the performance of all God's promises, that we stedfastly believe he will perform them. A remarkable instance whereof our blessed Lord himself hath given us. For having said, *Ask and it shall be given you*, Mat. vii. and so passed his word, that whatsoever we pray for, we shall receive; he elsewhere explains himself, saying, *Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark xi. 24. So that if we do believe that God, according to his word, will give us the good things we pray for, then he will do it, otherwise not. The same may be said of all other promises whatsoever. If we will not trust God, nor take his word for what he hath said, we exclude ourselves from the benefit of his promises. But if we certainly believe that he will perform them, he will most certainly perform them to us.

HENCE therefore faith may in this sense also be justly termed the substance of things hoped for; not only as the word *ὑπόστασις* sometimes signifies confidence and full persuasion; but likewise in that faith puts us into the actual possession, and so gives us the very substance of those good things we hope for at the hands of God, according to the promises he hath made to mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now from the nature of faith in general thus explained, we may easily gather what it is properly to believe in Christ. For seeing he was the first thing that was ever promised to mankind *Gen. iii.* and all other promises being virtually, yea, really contained in him; hence to believe in Christ is indeed to believe in all the promises of God, as made and confirmed to us in Christ. For, as the apostle saith, *All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, 2 Cor. i. 20.* that is, as *St. Chrysostom* expounds it, *ἐν αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ἔχει καὶ πληρωθῆναι, In him they have their being and accomplishment,* or confirmation. So that, all things consider'd, I know not how we can express the right notion of true faith in Christ better, than in the words of our church before quoted; where she defines it to be a sure trust and confidence on God's merciful promises to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. For this plainly supposes, that we trust on God's merciful promises to be converted from our sins by Christ, to have our sins pardoned by him, to be sanctified and accepted by him. For otherwise we cannot possibly be saved from everlasting damnation by him.

WHEN our Saviour therefore bids us come unto him, or believe in him, his will and pleasure in brief is this, that we come off from all vain conceits and expectations from ourselves; from all trusting to our own obedience or good works, and from all dependence upon our own natural powers or acquired parts, and that we put our whole trust and confidence only on him, as in whom all God's promises are made and confirmed to us, for all things necessary to make us holy here, or happy for ever. And if we do this, our blessed Lord here tells us, *he will give us rest,* which is the last thing to be considered in the words.

BUT for the understanding of this, we must consider what kind of persons they are which our Saviour here calls unto him, *even those that labour, and are heavy laden;* that is, as I have shewn, such as are weary of the tyranny, as well as heavy laden with the burden of their sins, that long to have their lusts subdued, as well as their transgressions pardoned to them, being troubled both with and for their sins. Now from both these troubles Christ here promises to free those that come unto him, and to give them rest, both from the power, and from the guilt of sin that lies so heavy upon them. And verily he is equally qualified for the conferring of both these great blessings upon us; being *made unto us wisdom* as well as *righteousness*, our *sanctification* as well as *redemption*, *1 Cor. i. 30.* *And he was exalted to be both a Prince and a Saviour, and so give repentance to Israel, as well as remission of sins, Acts v. 31.* So that he hath not only power to give us pardon, if we do repent; but to give us repentance too, that so we may be pardoned.

FIRST therefore if we come to Christ, he will free us from the power and tyranny of sin. Sin shall no longer have dominion over us, because then we shall not be under the law, but under his grace. And he will give us such a repentance, that our hearts shall be wholly turned from sin to God. And that he both can and will do this for us, is plain from the design of his coming into the world. For he was sent on purpose *to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8.* *And to bless us, by turning every one of us from his iniquities, Acts iii. 26.* *Yea, he therefore gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 14.* *And that he might present us to himself holy and without blemish, Ephes. v. 27.* This therefore being one great end both of his assuming of, and suffering in, our human nature, we need not fear but that he both can and will do it for us.

ESPECIALLY considering, that, for the accomplishment thereof, he by his death hath purchased, not only the pardon of our sins, but likewise the right of bestowing the Spirit upon us; and therefore he promises his disciples, that when he was gone he would send the Spirit to them; but tells them withal, *that unless he went, the Spirit could not come, John xvi. 7.* Assuring us thereby, that the

coming of the Spirit depended upon his merit and mediation for us in heaven. And verily as it is only by the death of Christ, that our sins can be pardoned; so it is only by his Spirit that our lusts can be subdued, and our hearts made holy. For altho the human nature in general was sanctify'd by its being assumed into the divine Person, yet no human person in particular can be sanctified, but by its partaking of the divine Nature. Hence they who are sanctified or made holy, are said to be *partakers of the divine Nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. and to partake of God's holiness, which is his nature, Heb. xii. 1. But we can no way partake of the divine Nature, but by *the Spirit of God dwelling in us*, as the apostle speaks, Rom. viii. 9.

NEITHER is there any other way whereby we can possibly have the Spirit of God to dwell within us, but only by our being united to Christ by faith. For the whole design of the gospel teacheth us, that Christ, as Θεάνθρωπος and Mediator, is the only Head, from whom the Spirit as diffused into all the members of his mystical body the Church, that is, the congregation of all faithful people, or such as really and truly believe in him. And therefore such, and only such as thus believe in Christ, are enabled by his Spirit to do all such good works as God hath prepared for them to walk in. *For who is he, saith the apostle, that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* 1 John v. 5. Plainly implying, that no man can mortify his lusts, or overcome the temptations of the world, but only by faith in Christ. *For as the branch, saith Christ himself, cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. But he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit,* John xv. 4, 5. As if he should have said, Such as continue to put their whole trust and confidence in me, such, and only such, I will enable to perform whatsoever is required of them. Which we see exactly fulfill'd in St. Paul, saying, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13.

HENCE therefore we may observe, how truly our Church asserts, That good works do necessarily spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit. For seeing Christ doth most certainly communicate all the graces of his Spirit, the only principle of all true piety and goodness, to those who truly believe in him, hence it must needs follow, that the faith and works be distinguished in the notion, they are never separated in the subject, but that wheresoever true faith is, it always purifies the heart, sanctifies the whole soul; and so produceth all manner of good works, both of piety towards God, and likewise of justice and charity to our neighbour, as the fathers frequently affirm: and by consequence that whosoever doth not perform sincere obedience to all the commandments of God, he may pretend what he pleases, but he doth not truly believe in Christ. For if he did so, Christ would most certainly perform the promise he here makes of freeing him from his sins, by enduing him with the grace of the Holy Spirit, to amend his life according to God's holy word.

THIS therefore is the first thing our Saviour here promiseth to those that come unto him, and the first thing which we should go unto him for, even our sanctification. For without this, whatsoever else he doth or can do for us, will avail us nothing: No, not tho he should carry us into heaven. For heaven itself would be no heaven to us, unless we be first sanctified, and so made capable of enjoying those pure and spiritual delights, which are there provided for us. For suppose, any one here present that is still in his sins, and so averse from God and goodness, should be immediately snatch'd up and placed among the glorified saints and angels, adoring and praising God in heaven, what happiness could such a one find? What pleasure could he take either in their company or employment? Alas! his sinful soul is altogether averse from such holy persons and actions as those are. Insomuch that heaven itself would seem more like hell than heaven to him. The company would seem irksome, the work tedious, and the very presence of God himself would afford more matter of grief and trouble, than of joy and happiness to him. In short, a blind man may as soon distinguish colours, and a deaf man sounds; yea, a brute beast may as soon surfeit himself upon the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration, as ever a sinful soul be ravished with these celestial joys, which are not only above him, but contrary to his very temper and inclinations.

tions. And therefore unless our blessed Saviour incline our hearts to God, and sanctify our natures throughout, we shall not be qualify'd for heaven, nor for any other blessing whatsoever which he hath procured for us. But blessed be his name for it, if we do but come unto him, he is both able and willing to do, not only this, but whatsoever else we can desire of him.

For he will not only free us from the strength, but likewise from the guilt of these sins we labour under. He will take care that all our bonds and obligations to punishment be cancelled, and made void by virtue of that infinite satisfaction which he himself hath made to divine justice for them. For he being both God and man in one and the same person, whatsoever he suffered as man, could not but be of infinite value and merit; because, tho the nature in which he suffer'd was but finite, yet the Person which suffer'd in that nature was infinite. Hence therefore this divine Person suffering in our human nature, not only stripes, agonies, reproaches, but even death itself, that death which was due to the whole nature of man, being undergone by it, in the divine Person, was more than if all the human persons in the world had suffer'd eternal death, and by consequence as much as justice itself could require. And therefore it is said that he was made *a propitiation for the sins of the whole world!* 1 John ii. 2. that is, in the words of our church, *he, by his own oblation of himself once offered, hath made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world!* or of all mankind. Insomuch, that if any one man's sins be not pardoned by them, it is not for want of sufficiency in Christ's sufferings, but by reason of his own obstinacy or negligence, in not performing the conditions required for the applying the sufferings of the human nature in Christ unto his own particular Person. For seeing that that death, which was threaten'd to all mankind in the first *Adam*, was undergone by the whole nature of man in the second; hence all particular persons, comprehended under that general nature, are capable of receiving the benefit of those sufferings, if they will but apply them rightly to themselves. And all that is required for the application of them, is only to perform the duty enjoined in my text, even to come to Christ in the sense which I have now explained. For if we do that, Christ himself hath here told us, that he will give us rest.

HAVING thus explained these words unto you, I might now use some arguments whereby to prevail upon you to go to Christ, that so you may find rest to your souls: But that I hope will be altogether needless and in vain. For needs a shipwreck'd seaman be courted to come to shore, or a weary traveller to a place of rest? Needs a man in want be desired to receive relief, or one in pain to accept of ease? How then can we, who know how many and great our sins have been, how strong and prevalent our lusts still are, how can we need arguments to persuade us to go to Christ, who alone can save us? However, I humbly crave leave in his name, to speak a few words unto you.

ALTHO you be here at present, the time you know will come, when you will all be in another world; either in a world of happiness, or else in a world of misery, that is, either in heaven or in hell, there to live for evermore. And, from your presence here at this time, I cannot but conclude that you all desire and hope when you die to go to heaven, the only place of real and eternal happiness. But heaven you know is a place where none but saints can come. And therefore unless you be, not such as call themselves saints in our days, but really and truly so, you can never expect to go thither. But, blessed be God for it, you are all as yet capable of attaining such a degree of sanctity, as to fit and qualify you for heaven and eternal glory. For Christ is ready to confer it upon you, if you will but come to him, so as to put your whole trust and confidence only in him for it. Indeed a stedfast hope and dependence upon God, is a certain way to accomplish any good and lawful enterprise we undertake. For God never yet did, nor ever will fail them that put their trust in him. How much more when we trust on him for the assistance of his own grace and spirit, to serve himself with a perfect heart and willing mind, according to his promises declared to mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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WHEREFORE, in the name of him that made you, that preserves you, and hath redeemed you with his own blood; in his name I humbly pray and beseech you all, to hearken to your Saviour's call, and resolve, without any more ado, to go unto him. In order whereunto, I would advise you to observe these few necessary rules.

FIRST, Be sure to continue firm and stedfast to Christ's holy catholick church, and particularly to that part of it, which is established among you; and suffer not yourselves to be seduced, either into popery or schism, upon any pretence whatsoever. For if you either separate yourselves, or be justly separated from the church, which is Christ's body, you will be thereby deprived of all communion with him that is the head of it.

BUT, in the next place, think it not enough that ye are outward and visible members of Christ's church; but live up to the rules and orders of it, constantly using the several means of grace and salvation, which are thereby administer'd to you, prescrib'd by Christ himself as the way whereby to go unto him; such as fasting, and praying, and praising God, and hearing his holy word publicly read and expounded to you, and especially, receiving the sacraments of Christ's mystical body and blood, ordained on purpose for our more intimate access unto him, and communion with him, that we may partake of the influence of his Holy Spirit, and of the merits of that death which he suffer'd for us. And therefore they who really mind the concerns of another life, cannot but look upon it as a great happiness, to live in a place where this holy sacrament is so duly and frequently administer'd, as it is here. And they who either totally omit, or frequently neglect it, will one day wish they had not: But then it will be too late.

LASTLY, Content not yourselves with the mere outward performance of these and the like duties, but perform them heartily and sincerely, with your whole souls as well as bodies; still believing and trusting on Christ, to make them effectual to the purposes for which he hath appointed them.

Do this, and then I dare assure you, in his name, that he will soon make good his word, and fulfil his promise to you. For he, by his Holy Spirit, accompanying the means, will so enlighten your minds, rectify your wills, and regulate your passions, as to sanctify your whole souls, and reduce them to a right temper and constitution, and then he will soon discharge and absolve you from all your sins, and give rest to your souls, not only from all evil here, but in God himself the chiefest of all goods hereafter.

AND that ye may neither fear to come unto him, nor doubt of receiving such great blessings from him; hark, he himself here calls you with his own mouth, saying, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Oh blessed Invitation! God, of his infinite mercy, grant that we may all with thankfulness accept of it, in and through him who hath made it to us, even our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, be all honour, praise, and glory, from this time forth, and for evermore. Amen.



S E R M O N CXVII.

The Easiness of Christ's Yoke.

M A T. XI. 30.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

OUR great Lord and Master, Christ, in the foregoing verses, calls upon all such as *labour, and are heavy laden*, and bids them come to him, and to *take his yoke upon them*, that is, to become his disciples, believe his doctrine, submit to his discipline, and give up themselves wholly to be ruled and governed by him, assuring them, for their encouragement, that if they do this, howsoever uneasy, restless and weary they were before, they should soon find rest to their souls. But lest they should doubt or wonder how that could be, considering it is a yoke that he would have them take upon them, which might be as heavy and troublesome as that which they labour'd under, and were heavy laden with before; to prevent all such doubts and fears, he acquaints them with the easiness of that yoke, and the lightness of that burden which he would put upon them. *For my yoke, saith he, is easy, and my burden is light*, where the word *χερσὺς*, which we translate Easy, signifies also Good, and Gracious, and Pleasant, and Useful; and therefore the meaning of our Lord in general is, that whatsoever he requires us either to do or to suffer for him, may be both done and suffered with ease and pleasure; that he doth not invite us to a sower, melancholy, and disconsolate course of life, nor impose any thing upon us, that will make our lives uneasy or troublesome to us; that all his laws are so mild and gentle, so gracious and benign, so far from having any thing of difficulty, much less of impossibility in them, that there is no man but may observe them if he will, with pleasure and delight; so as to find rest and comfort to his soul, as well as for the observation of them. And that is the reason why he brings in these words here, to confirm the truth of what he had said before. Before he had said, that they who take his yoke upon them, shall find rest to their souls; and to prove that, he adds, *For my yoke is easy, and my burthen is light*.

BUT I fear there may be some among you, who may be apt to question the truth of this divine saying, tho' utter'd by truth itself; or at least may wonder at it, mens minds being commonly possessed with very dismal and frightful apprehensions of religion, even of the Christian itself; as if it was so hard and difficult to perform the conditions required in the gospel, that it is in vain for them to attempt it. And this, I verily believe, is one great reason, why so few set themselves about it in good earnest.

THAT therefore I may remove this prejudice, and suppress such vain and groundless fears, which discourage you from taking Christ's yoke upon you; I desire you, in the first place, to consider whose yoke it is. It is the yoke of Christ, *my yoke*, saith Christ himself. But is it Christ's own yoke? A yoke that he hath ordered and appointed for you? Then you may be confident it is a very easy one. For he who came into the world on purpose to make your yoke easy, certainly would never put an hard one upon you. He, who hath undergone so much for you, as he hath done, would never, surely, lay more upon you, than you are able to undergo for him. In short, it cannot be imagined that Christ himself, who laid down his own life to save us, should require more of us, in order to our being saved, than what we may easily do; that he should purchase our happiness at so dear
a rate,

a rate, and yet make it difficult for us to attain it. No; he that considers Christ's infinite love and compassion to us, how desirous he is to make us happy, and how much he hath done and suffered for that purpose, cannot but from thence conclude, that he would never require any more of us, than what is both necessary and easy for us to do; and by consequence, that whatsoever yoke it is that he would have us take upon us, it cannot but be as easy as it is possible for it to be made.

ESPECIALLY considering, that Christ himself here affirms it to be an easy yoke. *My yoke, saith he, is easy.* And do not you all believe his words to be all true? I dare say you do. For whose word can you better take than his who cannot lie? Doth not he know what you are all able to do? Yes, surely: He having taken our nature upon him, perfectly, yea experimentally, understands its temper and constitution: so that he is thoroughly acquainted both with the disposition and abilities of all and every person that partakes of that nature. Infomuch that he knows, infinitely better than we ourselves do, what is hard and what is easy for us, what we cannot, and what we can do, if we will. And therefore he having asserted it, whatsoever opinion we have hitherto entertained of it, we may and ought now to be confident that his yoke is really a gentle and an easy yoke.

HOWSOEVER, that you may more clearly apprehend, and be more fully convinced of the truth and certainty of this divine proposition; I desire you, first, to compare Christ's yoke with other yokes, and you will soon find it to be so much easier, that there is no comparison between them.

FIRST, compare it with the yoke, which *Moses*, by God's own appointment, made for his own people the *Jews*. That *St. Paul* truly calleth, *The yoke of bondage*, Gal. v. 1. *Yea, it was such a yoke*, that neither the apostles themselves, nor their fathers were able to bear, Acts xv. 10. Not to mention circumcision, and the Paschal lamb, what costly sacrifices were to be offer'd? What a multitude of rites and ceremonies were to be observed by them? It was very difficult to reckon them all up; how much more to perform them as they ought? And yet how difficult soever it was, all that truly feared God observed them all exactly: As we see in the famous instance of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, of whom it is said, *That they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*, Luke i. 6. where, by the commandments, we are to understand the moral law, by the ordinances, the Levitical or ceremonial law, which then was in as much force as the other.

Now those two righteous persons punctually observed both these laws, and were therefore accounted righteous because they did so. But what a difficult task had they, and all that lived in those days, upon them, religiously to perform all and every thing that was prescribed in the ceremonial law? This was a yoke fitted for this stiff-necked people, and therefore made so hard and heavy, tho it is almost a miracle that any of them were able to bear it.

BUT this law of ordinances, as the apostle calls it, is now abolished, or rather expired, together with our Saviour; it ceased in course, when his death, which was typified by it, was once accomplished. So that this heavy yoke is now laid aside, and our Lord puts no other upon us, than that of the moral law, which is nothing in comparison of the other, and only two sacraments, easy to be performed.

IN the next place, consider the yoke of this world, what trouble it puts you to, to get the riches, or pleasures, or honours of it. How doth it often distract your thoughts, perplex your minds, and disturb you in your very sleep? What care have you all upon you to get wealth, and what fear of losing it when it is gotten? How do men commonly run to and fro, encompassing both sea and land for it? How do they impair their health, consume their bodies, hazard their lives, and destroy their very souls, and all for that which can never make them either wiser or better when they have it. And which they are never sure to get neither, much less to keep, after all their care and pains.

How incomparably easy is the yoke which Christ puts upon us? He requires no such toil and travail; no such carking cares and perplexity of mind; nothing that can either break our rest, or endanger our health, or life; nothing but what will do us, as well as make us, good; nothing but what we may do with as much ease, if we will, as we can be willing to do it. And besides, we can never lose our labour in his service, as men usually do in the drudgery of the world. For if

we

we do what he commands, we are sure to obtain what he hath promised to us. And therefore we may lay it down as a most certain rule, that it is much easier to serve God than Mammon; much easier to be good than to be rich; and by consequence, that Christ's is a very easy yoke indeed, in comparison of the world's. Insomuch that if people would take but half the pains for heaven, that they do for earth, they could never miss of it. If they would spend but the seventh part of the time in their general, which they spend in their particular calling, they would be soon as rich in faith and good works, as they either are or can desire to be in money.

BUT, in this place, our Lord seems to oppose his yoke and burden to that of sin especially, which is so great and grievous, that when men have once a true sense and sight of it, it lies so heavy upon their consciences, that without the almighty power of God, they could never be able to endure it. And therefore they are here said to labour under it, and to be heavy laden with it. As *David* was, when he cry'd out, *For my iniquities are gone over my head, as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me*, Plal. xxxviii. 4. But this, the hardest of all yokes, the heaviest of all burdens, Christ frees those from, who come to him and take his yoke upon them; which therefore must needs exceed the other in ease and gentleness, as much as holiness exceeds sin, or heaven hell. For his yoke, instead of lying too heavy upon them that bear it, gives ease to their minds, quiet to their consciences, and rest to their souls: Well then might our Lord say, in this respect also, *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*.

NEITHER is it so only in comparison of other yokes, but likewise in itself, in its own nature. Forasmuch as Christ requires no more of any of us, in order to our obtaining eternal salvation, but what is plain to be understood, and easy to be performed, by any one that will but apply his mind seriously to it, and take that course that he hath prescribed for it.

FIRST, I say the commands of Christ are all plain and easy to be understood, so plain and easy, that a child may learn them: For whatsoever he requires us either to believe or do, is briefly comprehended in our church catechism, which I hope to find by experience that your children can say, as well as you, yea, and understand too as much as is necessary for them. It is true, there are some great mysteries revealed in the gospel, which you cannot understand; but Christ therefore doth not command you to understand, but only to believe them, and that surely is no hard matter. For it is no more than what you all do every day. If a wise and honest man tells you a story, how strange soever it may seem at first, yet you will believe it only upon his word; what great business is it then to give credit to what Christ, what God himself saith, who can neither be deceived nor deceive? And yet this is all that is required of us in the high mysteries of the gospel. He that only knows what Christ would have him to believe, and then believes it upon his word, whether he understands it or no, does all that the Gospel enjoins in this respect. And as for the duties which he would have us do, they are all so plainly set down in the holy scripture, that he who runs may read them; and he who hath any sense or reason at all may understand them. For they are all expressed in the most easy and familiar terms that can be. Insomuch that if any of you be ignorant of your whole duty, both to God and man, it is not because you cannot, but because you will not know it. For if ye would but be half as careful and diligent to understand the will of God, as ye are to learn trades and callings in the world, you would soon understand that, far better than ye do them.

AND as Christ's commands are easy to be known, so they are to be practised too, if men would but give their minds to it. For they are all agreeable to our very nature, and suited to that temper and constitution that we are all made of. Insomuch that all the joy and happiness we are capable of, consists in our due observation of them. For being designed at first to serve, and worship, and glorify him that made us, he therefore made us of such a frame and temper, that we are always restless and uneasy, but while we are doing the work he made us for, performing such duties as he for that purpose hath laid upon us: Whereas all the while that we live according to his laws, in a due obedience to his commands, we live in our proper element, and so are at ease and rest in our own minds, and

and find a secret kind of pleasure and satisfaction in our souls, arising from the apprehension that we have done our duty, and answered the end of our creation; that we have pleased God, and that he therefore is pleased with us.

HENCE it is, that St. John saith, *That the commandments of God are not grievous*, 1 John v. 3. They are not so heavy as to sink down our spirits into grief and trouble, but rather lift them up to the highest pitch of joy and comfort. As David found by experience, when he said, *Thy testimonies have I taken for an heritage for ever, for they are the very joy or rejoicing of my heart*, Psal. cxix. 111. *The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb*, Psal. xix. 8, 10. And therefore he often professeth, that he delighted in the law, the statutes and commandments of God, Psal. cxix. 16, 47, 70. Yea, so exceeding great was his pleasure and delight in God's commandments, that it over-weigh'd all his sorrow, and kept up his spirits in the midst of all the crosses and troubles he met with in the world. *Unless thy law, saith he, had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction*, ver. 92. *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet thy commandments are my delights*, ver. 143. My delights in the plural number, are all the delights he had in the whole world.

St. Paul also was of the same mind, *I delight*, saith he, *in the law of God, after the inward man*, Rom. vii. 22. *And this is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world*, 2 Cor. i. 12. Yea, it is much to be observed, that all the persecutions that he and the rest of the apostles suffered for it, rather increased than diminished their joy and pleasure in obeying Christ's commands. Insomuch that they rejoiced *that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*, Acts v. 41. *I take pleasure*, saith St. Paul, *in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake*, 2 Cor. xii. 10. Strange things for a man to take pleasure in! yet when they are undergone for Christ's sake in obedience to his commands, that obedience fills the soul with such real and substantial pleasure, that it takes off all sense of suffering, and turns that also into matter of rejoicing; so that howsoever grievous the suffering may seem, the pleasure that attends it makes it not only easy but delightful. And seeing not only all the rest of Christ's commands, but those also whereby he enjoins us, if there be occasion, to take up our cross and suffer for him, afford us so much joy and comfort, there cannot surely be any great difficulty in observing any of them. For nothing can seem hard or uneasy to us that is pleasant, nothing heavy that delights us. And therefore our Lord might well say, *My yoke is easy, and my burden is light*.

ESPECIALLY considering that he hath not only fitted his yoke so exactly to our necks, that it is a pleasure rather than a trouble to bear it, but that he also is always ready to assist us in it. For he commands us to do nothing but what he himself will enable us to do, if we set about it as we ought, in his name. What is wanting in us, he'll make up for himself, and supply the defects of our natural strength, with his own supernatural grace and virtue. A remarkable instance whereof we have in St. Paul, who having got a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of satan to buffet him, and not being able to bear it by his own strength, he addressed himself to Christ by prayer, who gave him this gracious answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*. Most gladly therefore, saith the apostle, *will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*. And then he adds, *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, &c.* 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. From whence it appears, that the great reason why it was so easy and pleasant to him to do or suffer any thing for Christ's sake, was, because the power of Christ himself rested upon him, and assisted him in it. By which he looked upon himself as able to do all things; *I have learnt*, saith he, *in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, which strenghteneth me*, Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13. As if he had said, I can do all things that Christ requireth of me, by that grace and assistance which Christ himself vouchsafeth to me. Where, as he plainly ascribes the glory of all he did to Christ, so he reckons nothing hard or difficult for him to do, through his strength

and power. And as St. Paul did, so may we do all things too, through Christ which strengtheneth us. Inasmuch that altho, as Christ himself saith, we can do nothing without him, yet there is nothing but we can do by him. By him we can mortify our sins, and withstand all temptations to them: By him we can overcome the world, so as to live above it: By him we can so fast and pray as to be heard; so hear and read as to be profited; and so receive his blessed body and blood, as to have him to *dwell in us, and we in him*: By him we can love and fear, and trust in God, and serve and honour him with a perfect heart and willing mind: By him we can *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*: By him we can be humble, and meek, and patient, and loyal, and charitable, and good, and just to all: by him we can do, and by him we can suffer any thing that he sees good to lay upon us. Wherefore, seeing we serve a Master who will neither require more of us than what he will give us grace to do; nor lay any more upon us, than what he will give us strength to bear: His *yoke* must needs be *easy*, and his *burden* light.

HOWSOEVER, to make it still more clear, if possible, and undeniable, I desire you to consider, in the last place, that as Christ assists us in doing what he commands, so for his sake God accepts of what we so do, although it come short of what the rigour of the law requires. Christ's grace and Holy Spirit is always present with us, to excite, and influence, and assist us in obeying his commands; so that if we do but use and improve it as we ought, and as well as we can, there is nothing commanded by him, but what we may easily obey. But by reason of our natural infirmities, we cannot, or, at least, we do not commonly use and improve it so as to make our obedience perfect, but there are still some failures and imperfections in it, for which Almighty God might justly reject it. Wherefore, that nothing might be wanting to make his *yoke as easy* and his *burden as light* as possible, our blessed Saviour hath taken care of this also. For he, both in his life and at his death, performed that perfect, that divine obedience to God, and merited so much for us, that he is able from thence to make good what is defective on our parts: Inasmuch that upon the account of his merits and mediation for us, God is pleased to accept of our sincere endeavours instead of absolute perfection: and of what we can do by the grace of the gospel, instead of what we ought to do by the strictness of the law, to the praise and glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, as St. Paul saith, *Eph. i. 6*. And therefore St. Peter, speaking to all Christians, saith, *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And therefore, whatsoever spiritual sacrifices we offer, whatsoever good works we do, whatsoever obedience we perform to the law of God by the grace of Christ, in and through him, God will accept of what we do, notwithstanding the many imperfections there may be in it. And this indeed is that which crowns all the rest. For hence it comes to pass, that we poor mortals upon earth may, by Christ's assistance, perform such obedience as for his sake will be as well-pleasing unto God, as the services of the glorified saints and angels in heaven are; for tho our obedience be not in itself so perfect as theirs, yet it is reckon'd so, by virtue of that which Christ in our nature perform'd for us. Which one thing duly considered, is of itself sufficient to demonstrate, Christ's *yoke* to be the easiest that can possibly be put upon us: For now nothing else is required of us, but only to do what we can ourselves, and to trust in Christ for his assistance in the doing of it, and for God's acceptance of it, when it is done: And if we do but this, we need trouble ourselves no further: For these are all the terms propounded to us in the gospel, in order to our being saved. This is the only *yoke* that Christ puts about our necks, and the only *burden* he lays upon our backs, which none of us but may easily bear, and therefore must needs conclude, that his *yoke* is indeed *easy*, and his *burden* light.

Now, what follows from all this, but that seeing Christ's *yoke* is so *easy*, and his *burden* so *light*, as he himself saith, and we have shewn it to be, we all resolve to take it upon us without any more ado. This therefore is that, which in his name and stead I would now advise you all to do, even to hearken to your blessed Saviour, here commanding you to take his *yoke* upon you, that *easy yoke* which he hath purchased for you with his own blood. And tho he paid so dear for it, you may

may now have it for taking up, and together with it, all the glory and happiness which attends it. And be not disheartened at his calling it a *yoke*; for tho it be one, it is the easiest that he himself, by his infinite merits, and his almighty power could make for you: so that if it had been left to your own choice what to do, that ye might obtain eternal life, you could not in reason have desired less, nor indeed so little, as he requires of you; for it is no more than what every soul of you may do, if ye will; that is all, be but willing and the work is done. Do but once take Christ's *yoke* upon you, and you will soon find what ye have now heard to be true, by your own experience, even that it is very *light* and *easy*.

ALL the difficulty is in your taking it up at first, in your first setting upon a pious and religious course of life. That, I confess, may seem to be something difficult; not from any thing in the nature of religion itself, but by reason of the corruption of our nature, and our long continuance in sin, which hath made it habitual, and in a manner natural to us. And it will require some care and pains to break off our old customs, so as to walk, for the future, in *newness of life*. And therefore our Lord himself elsewhere saith, that the *gate is straight, and the way narrow that leadeth unto life*, Mat. vii. 13. that is, our first passage or entrance upon an holy life is straight, and the way narrow that leadeth to it. But when we are once passed through the gate, and got into the way, then all things will be smooth and easy to us; and we may walk on cheerfully till we get to heaven.

WHEREFORE, that I may persuade you all to submit your necks to Christ's *yoke*, to give up yourselves wholly to his service, whatsoever difficulty you may fancy in it, I desire you to consider three things.

1. HOWSOEVER difficult it may seem, it is possible for every soul here present, to do whatsoever Christ commands, so as to become his faithful disciples, real saints, such as the gospel requires you all to be, and such as many have been already. And why should not we be such as well as any other? If we be not, the fault is wholly in ourselves, in our own corrupt wills; we will not, and that is the only reason that we do not, serve God as we ought. Do but resolve, by God's grace, to set upon it in good earnest, and the business is done. For,

2. WHEN ye have once taken Christ's *yoke* upon you, and made trial of it, you will feel it to be, as he saith, *easy* and *light*; yea, comfortable and pleasant to you. When ye have once enter'd upon God's service, and are accustom'd to it, you'll find it to be perfect freedom: All difficulties will then be over. You'll have so much joy and comfort, so much rest and quiet, so much pleasure and satisfaction in your minds, from your obeying and serving God, that nothing which he commands will seem hard or grievous to you.

3. IF ye take Christ's easy yoke upon you, and bear his light burden, while ye live, you'll get to heaven when ye die: And what can ye desire more? For there you will have more than as yet ye can desire: For there you'll be with Christ, with God himself, and be as happy as it is possible for creatures to be. And that surely would be a sufficient recompense, altho ye should spend your whole life in toil and labour for it: How much more, when nothing else is required of you, than what ye may all do with ease and pleasure, as Christ himself assures us with his own mouth, saying, *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*.



S E R M O N CXVIII.

The Christian Race.

I C O R. ix. 24.

So run, that ye may obtain.

THE prophets, the apostles, and the ministers of Christ, in all ages, have complain'd of the little effect their ministry had upon the people they were sent to: And we have as much cause to make the same complaint now, if not much more than ever: For tho God's holy word was never more frequently read, more plainly expounded, or more powerfully pressed, for many ages, than it is in this; yet there are but few that mind it, but few that are ever the better for it. I speak not only of those, who, according to St. Paul's prophecy, will not *endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears*, 2 Tim. iv. 3. But of those also who profess to believe and come to hear the good word of God, as administer'd by those who are sent by God himself to do it, there are but few of them that do any more than hear it: Tho they hear it over and over again, it is all one, they will not do it: Tho we tell them from Christ's own mouth, that *except they repent, they must all perish*, yet they will not do it: Tho we tell them, upon his infallible word, that if they *first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all other necessary things shall be added to them*, yet they will not do it: Tho we tell them, that it is their interest, as well as duty, to perform both their publick and private devotions to Almighty God, every day, and to serve him with reverence and godly fear, yet they will not do it: Tho we invite them in the name of Christ to come to his own table, and there feed upon his most blessed body and blood, so as to partake of all the blessings which he hath merited for them, yet they will not come: some not at all, and others so seldom, as to shew they care not whether they ever come or no; like those in the parable, who when they were invited by a King to the marriage of his own son, *they made light of it, and went their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandise*, Mat. xxii. 5. Thus the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, usually choke the seed of God's word, and make it unfruitful, how carefully soever it is sown. It rarely meets with an honest and good heart, that will bring forth fruit to perfection.

THIS may seem a severe reflection upon the age we live in, but I am sure it is true: There are none here present, who take notice of what is done in the world, but know it to be so of the greatest part of those they are acquainted with: Many, I fear, know it to be true of themselves, that they have heard the word of God for many years together, and yet, to this day, will not do it. I judge no man, but leave every one to the judgment of God, and of his own conscience. But I desire you all to consider, what the Judge of the whole world saith, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*, John xiii. 17. Whereby he hath assured you, that your hearing or knowing your duty, will never make you happy, unless you do it. But it will rather aggravate your sin and misery; for *to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin*, Jam. iv. 17. He doth not only sin, by not doing good, but he sins also by knowing how to do it, and yet not doing it; and so is guilty of a double Sin, one in neglecting his duty, as it is commanded by God, and another in neglecting it, altho he himself

knows

knows it to be his duty; and by consequence he sins both against God and his own conscience too, and will fare accordingly in the other world; where it will be more tollerable for those that never heard of the word of God, than for such as heard it, and yet refus'd to conform their faith and actions to it.

WHEN I seriously reflect upon these things, I cannot but dread to think of the sad account that many of us will have to give at the last day; and heartily wish, that I may be an instrument in God's hand, to bring them to a better mind; that, for the future, they may be *doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving their own souls*, Jam. i. 22. that they may not be hearing and hearing all their life long, and all in vain, and to no purpose; like those who are always running in a race, and yet never get the prize; but that they may so run as to obtain, as the apostle here adviseth, or rather Almighty God, by him, commandeth all men to do.

For here we may first observe, he speaks to all indifferently, whatsoever state or condition they are in, as to this world, high or low, rich or poor; as all are capable of it, so he would have all run, so as to obtain the crown, the *incorruptible crown*, as he calls it in the next verse, even eternal life and glory in the world to come. This is offer'd in the gospel unto all; so that all may have it, that will but take the care and pains they ought for it; which the apostle expresseth by running for it, in allusion to the *Isthmian* games, where men used to run races for a certain prize, which was set before them: Which kind of race being usually run near *Corinth*, the inhabitants of that city could not but be thoroughly acquainted with all things relating to them; and therefore the apostle, writing to them, saith, *Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize*; and then adds, *So run that ye may obtain*. He takes it for granted, that they knew, that how many soever ran in those races, only one obtained the prize. But in this, he would have all run, so as to obtain it: This being such a prize, that not only one but all may have it, that will but run aright for it; for God is no respecter of persons, he would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 4. and accordingly, *He so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. He excepts against no man, nor, by consequence, against any one here present; but every one of you may as certainly be a glorified saint hereafter in heaven, as he is now in this place, if it be not his own fault; God permits, he invites, nay, he commands you all, to run so as to obtain eternal life. And therefore, if any of you miss of it, they must blame themselves for it: And so they will, when it is too late; they will blame themselves to all eternity, for being such fools and madmen, as to lose such a glorious prize, which once they might have had, but would not. The remembrance whereof will be a great aggravation of the misery that you will then suffer by your own default.

This is a thing much to be observed, and I wish you would always carry it in your minds, even, whatsoever your outward condition may be at present, you are all, as yet, in a capacity of obtaining the crown of glory. This prize is set before you all, and you are all, and every one, required to run, so as to obtain it.

But then you must observe withal, that you must run for it, or else you can never have it. No prize was ever gotten by sitting still, and doing nothing; much less this, the greatest that ever was, or ever can be offer'd to the world. You must not think that it will drop into your mouths, while you are asleep, or be forced upon you, whether you will or no. No, there is a great deal to be done before we can be *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, Col. i. 12. a great deal more than men commonly think of; who, when they have spent their whole life in nothing else but eating and drinking, and sleeping, or else in getting money, and perhaps using unlawful means to get it; yet all hope to go to heaven when they die. But what ground can they have to hope for it? None certainly; no more than a man hath to expect the prize that other people run for, altho he himself never runs at all, but stands stock still all the while; such a one, be sure, can never get it: And therefore the apostle here adviseth all to run, that have any mind to obtain it.

AND more than that too, he adviseth them not only to run, but to *run so as to obtain*: Whereby he puts them in mind, that they may run so as not to obtain. And so, verily, many do: As our Lord and Master also himself hath taught

us, saying, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able*, Luke xiii. 24. But lest we should mistake his meaning, he himself explains it in the following words, saying, *When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: And he shall answer and say unto you: I know you not whence you are: Then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence; and thou hast taught in our streets: But he shall say, I tell you I know you not whence you are: Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity*, ver. 25, 26, 27. These words are the more to be observed, because they were spoken by him who alone hath power to take in or shut out of heaven whom he pleaseth; and he spake them of himself, as the master of the house which he hath prepared in the other world, for those who love and honour him in this: And therefore must needs know whom he will, and whom he will not admit into it. And here he represents himself sitting, as he doth, at the right hand of the Father, and receiving into his heavenly house all that he knows to be his faithful friends and disciples, and as such are fit to dwell there. When they are all come in, he riseth up and shuts the door, that no more may enter. But notwithstanding that, many other come, hoping to get in, but the door being now shut, they are forced to stand without, and knock, and beg to be admitted, crying, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*. And he from within, protesting that he doth not know them, they begin to argue the case with him, saying, *We have eat and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*. As if they should say, We have professed thy religion, we have conversed with thee in thine ordinances, we have eat and drank at thy table, we have been taught thy holy word, and have heard it, as commonly as if it had been preached in our streets. How confident are these people that they should get to heaven? But what saith our Lord to them? *I tell you, I know you not whence ye are. Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity*. Whereby he hath plainly forewarned you, that altho you own him for your Lord and Master, altho you hear his word every day in the year, altho you receive the sacrament of his last supper, altho ye live and die in the outward profession of his religion; yet, after all, unless you live accordingly, ye shall never be admitted into heaven. If ye continue in sin, if ye be workers of iniquity, whatsoever else ye be or do, it will all signify nothing: but ye must be undone and lost for ever. Nay, elsewhere he goes much further, saying, *Many will say unto me at that day, Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* These are great things indeed, and all done in the name of Christ himself: Who can think but that these men shall be saved? They themselves may think so, but Christ doth not, for he will profess to them also, *I never knew you, depart from me all ye that work iniquity*, Mat. vii. 22, 23. From whence ye may see, that altho ye call him your Lord and Master, unless ye do the things that he hath commanded, he will not own you for his servants. Although ye prophesy in his name, unless ye practise accordingly, ye must depart from him: Although in his name ye cast the devil out of other people, unless ye cast him out of yourselves also, ye must go into that everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels. Although ye work miracles in his name, unless by it ye work righteousness too, ye cannot be saved.

HARK what he himself saith in the same place, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven*, Mat. vii. 21. How diligent soever therefore people are in seeking it, and how much soever they may do towards it, they can never enter into the kingdom of heaven, except they do the will of God. You may be sure of it, for Christ himself hath said it. And he said it on purpose that ye might take notice of it, and not expect that he should receive you into heaven when ye die, unless ye walk in all his commandments and ordinances, while ye live. Without this, whatsoever course ye take, and how fast soever ye run, ye will not run so as to obtain: All your labour and pains will be lost, and to no purpose; for ye will still be in the number of those, who *seek to enter in, and shall not be able*.

God grant that this may not be the case of many here present: From your presence here at this time, I cannot but in charity believe, that ye all seek the kingdom

kingdom of God, and desire to walk in that narrow path that leads to it: And so many do, as well as you, and yet, after all, come short of it: Such are they that separate themselves, thinking to go a new way to heaven, which none ever went before: Such are they that follow not the light of God's word, but that which they pretend to be within them, and so run just contrary to the course that God hath prescribed to them: Such are they that do some things, but not all that is required of them: Such are they that pray a little now and then, but do not make devotion their daily exercise and recreation: Such are they who often hear the word of God, but will never do it: Such are they who come to the holy sacrament, when they have nothing else to do, but suffer any worldly business to keep them from it: Such are they who set upon a religious and virtuous course of life, for some time, and afterwards leave it off again: Such are they who think to get to heaven by the merits of Christ, without doing what he hath commanded; and such are they who hope to get thither by their own merits without his. All these, and such like people, will seek to enter in, but shall not be able: They all run, but not so as to obtain. And I beseech you all to take heed, that ye be not found in the number of them, that your prayers may not be lost, and your hearing of sermons turn to no account to you: That your profession of the true faith, and all your endeavours after heaven may not be cast away and come to nothing at long run: That ye may not labour in vain, but so as to attain the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Or, as the apostle here expresseth it, *that ye may run so as to obtain.*

THAT the thing is possible, appears also from these very words; for the apostle would never advise us to *run so as to obtain*, if there was no way whereby we might certainly obtain what we run for; but the advice itself supposes and implies, that there is such a way, as will infallibly bring us to the kingdom of heaven, if we hit upon it, and run as we ought in it. This he takes for granted: And it is no more than what he himself, and many thousands besides, have found true by their own experience. In all ages some have run so as to obtain the crown of glory, and are now actually possessed of it in the other world. And why may not we do so as well as they? Blessed be God, we, as yet, are as capable of it as they were, while they were upon earth; they had the same corrupt nature to cleanse, the same enemies to grapple with, the same temptations to withstand, the same duties to perform, and all the same difficulties to press through, as we now have. And we have the same Saviour, the same scriptures, the same promises, the same sacraments, and all the same means of grace and salvation, as they had: Why then may not we run so as to obtain as well as they?

NAY, it is observable, that we not only may, but ought to do it: Almighty God himself hath commanded it, and so hath made it our duty, not only to run, but to *run so as to obtain*: And therefore, in his name, I beseech you all to do so. Do not content yourselves any longer with running on in a course of religious duties, with that carelessness and indifferency, which is so common in the world, as if it was no great matter how ye performed any duty, so that ye do but perform it at all. But do every thing that is required of you, with that intention of mind, that zeal, and earnestness of desire, that ye may attain the end of it; that ye may really love, and fear, and serve, and glorify God in the world, so that when ye go out of it, ye may live with him, and enjoy him for ever; that ye may not run in vain, but so as to obtain eternal life.

BUT how we may do this, is the principal thing to be here considered. The apostle here speaks only in general. *So run that ye may obtain*, without telling us particularly, how we must do it, or what course we must take while we are in this world, that we may be sure to live happily in the next? Which therefore I shall endeavour to search into, and explain, out of this apostle's other writings, and the other scriptures given by inspiration of God, who alone can tell us what he would have us do, that we may be saved. Which seeing the apostle here expresseth, by our running so that we *may obtain*, I shall keep as near as I can to the metaphor, which he, by the direction of God's Holy Spirit, useth; whereby to make this great work, the greatest we have to do in the world, plain and easy to all capacities.

FIRST therefore, we must know in general, that Jesus Christ is the only way whereby it is possible for any man to go to God, to get his love and favour, wherein all true happiness consisteth. *I, saith he, am the way, the truth, and the*

the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me, John xiv. 6. Whatsoever high conceits we may have of ourselves, be sure the most high God is infinitely above us, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; *whom no man hath seen, or can see*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. Tho' he be always with us, and it is in him we live and move, and have our being; yet we cannot so much as see him, much less can we, at least in our corrupt estate, have any access unto him, so as to find any grace and favour in his sight, without a mediator, or some middle person between him and us, by whom we may go up and make our addresses to him; but there is only *one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. But he being both God and Man in one Person, by laying hold on him, as Man, we may lift ourselves to God, and get into his favour again, as much as if we had never lost it; and so obtain everlasting life and salvation: But there is no way possible for any mortal man to do this, but only by Jesus Christ. Whereas he, as the apostle saith, is therefore *able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 28.

As ever therefore we desire to be saved, we must go unto God by Christ, believing and trusting on him to make our reconciliation with the Father. And if we do that, he both can and will save us to the uttermost, in that he is our Mediator and Advocate with the Father, continually interceding with him to receive us again into his favour, by virtue of that great propitiation which he made for us when he was upon earth. So that by him we may all *run* so as to obtain eternal salvation.

For this purpose therefore your first care must be *to walk in truth*, as St. John speaks, in the Third Epistle, ver. 4. in that truth which Jesus Christ, who is truth itself, hath made known to you, without going aside into the by-paths of error and heresy. You must, *from henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, in this age, as much, if not much more than ever, Eph. iv. 14. But ye must keep close to the truth, as it is in Jesus, firmly believing whatsoever he hath revealed, who being your Saviour, would never have revealed it, but that it is necessary for you to believe it upon his word, in order to your being saved by him. Unless ye therefore *run* this way, ye can never obtain.

Nor this way neither, unless ye run also in the way of God's commandments; doing what Christ your Saviour hath commanded, as well as believing what he hath revealed to you; for, as the apostle saith, *if a man strive for masteries, yet he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully*, 2 Tim. ii. 5. As if a man runs a race, altho he keeps all the while in the right way, yet he is not to have the prize, unless he observe all the laws and rules prescribed for it. So must you, in your Christian race, you must keep within the bounds which Christ hath set you, and do every thing which he requires, in order to your obtaining the crown which he hath promised to those who do so, and to none else. All others will run in vain, and, instead of getting the crown, will come off at last with shame and disgrace. But, as David observed, *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments*, Psal. cxix. 6. As Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; and therefore were accounted righteous before God, and so obtained the crown, Luke i. 6.

BUT how can we do this? We that cannot so much as think any thing of our selves, how can we be able to walk in all the commandments of God blameless? To that I answer, that the thing is possible, we cannot doubt, seeing others have done it before us: And why may not we do it as well as they? But how did they do it? That appears from the text itself: They walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord: They did not, they could not, do one without the other. They could not have walked in all the commandments, except they had walked also in all the ordinances; but by walking in the ordinances, they walked likewise in all the commandments, that being the means whereby they did it; for the ordinances were such positive precepts, which God had then enjoyn'd them to observe, about their sacrifices and other rites and ceremonies, typifying and foreshewing the death and intercession of Christ, and so to exercise their faith in him, and by that means to receive grace and power from him to walk, in all the commandments contained in the moral law. If we would *run* so as to obtain the crown which they have now got upon their heads, we must take the same course:

For

For it is certain, that without the grace and strength of Christ, we cannot make one true step towards it. Let us hear what he himself saith to his disciples, *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. whereby we are assured, that without him we can no more do good, than a branch that is cut off from the vine can bring forth fruit: that is, we can do none at all. But as a branch that abides in the vine, and partakes of the juice and sap, bringeth forth much fruit; so if we, by faith, abide in Christ, and partake of his grace and Spirit, we shall do much good, all that is required of us; *I can do all things*, saith the apostle, *by Christ that strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. And therefore when the same apostle was troubled with a *thorn in the flesh*, which hinder'd him in running the race that was set before him, he applied himself to Christ to take it out; who gave him this gracious answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. which doubtless was written for our learning, that we may know where our strength lies. Not in ourselves, but in Christ our head. In him we have both *righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24. strength to do what God commands, and righteousness to make it acceptable to him, when it is done. Inasmuch, that how weak soever we are in ourselves, and unable to walk in the way of God's commandments, yet if we do but live with a constant trust and dependence upon Christ for it, he will carry us through the whole race, and enable us to *run* so as to *obtain*. Which therefore that we may do, in every step we take, we must still be *looking up to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. and strictly observe the rule laid down by the apostle, *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*. Col. iii. 17. By this means we may *walk in all the commandments of the Lord*, so that in him we shall be accounted *blameless*.

BUT that we may receive this power and strength from Christ, to *walk in all the commandments of the Lord*, we must walk also in all his *ordinances*, those which he hath ordained in his Gospel, to be the way that leads to him: Such are fasting and watching, publick and private prayers, hearing God's holy word read and explain'd, praising his most glorious name, and receiving the sacrament of his most blessed body and blood. These are all the ordinances appointed in the new testament, instead of those many which were ordain'd in the old: and unless we walk in these, in all these ordinances of the Lord, we can never walk in all his commandments, so as to be found blameless, and by consequence obtain the crown. These being those means of grace and salvation, whereby we may receive grace from Christ, to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. And unless we use the means, we can never attain the end. Herein therefore lies the great mystery of running our Christian race aright, so as to get the prize, even by using all such means, as by God's appointment tend to it, heartily and constantly.

YE must first, I say, be sure to use them all, one as well as another: He that runs not through the whole course had as good stand still, and not run at all. He that useth some of the means, and not all, will lose his end, as much as if he used none; for that cannot be attained by any one or more of them by themselves, but by all together, influencing and assisting one another. By fasting, or keeping our bodies under, our minds are kept in a right temper and disposition for this spiritual exercise: By watching, we are always intent upon it: By hearing the word of God, we learn what to believe and do: By praying, we obtain grace to believe and do accordingly: By praising and magnifying the name of God, our hearts are raised up and fix'd upon him: And by receiving his body and blood, our souls are strengthened and refreshed, so as to be able to run with chearfulness and alacrity through the whole race that he hath set us, till we come to the end of it. And therefore if ye neglect any of these means, although ye use the rest, ye can receive no benefit from them, no more than as if ye used none at all: Which is a thing I would desire you always to remember, that ye may not think to get to heaven, by doing only some things, unless ye do all that is required of you, in order to it.

You have great cause to thank God, that ye live in a church where all the means of grace are duly administer'd to you. Have a care that ye do not lose the benefit of them by your neglect and carelessness: But take all opportunities ye

can get to use and improve them all, and every one, to your eternal advantage. Do not take up, as most do, with any one, or more of them, but exercise yourselves sometimes in one, sometimes in another, as they are administer'd, so as to run thro' them all. This is the way to obtain true grace and virtue, and, by consequence, the crown annexed to it.

BUT, for that end, whatsoever ye do, *ye must do it with all your might*: When ye are at your private devotions, ye must pray as earnestly, as if your life depended upon it; for so it doth, your spiritual and your eternal life. When ye come to church, ye must lay all other business aside, and mind nothing but the business ye come thither about, even to serve and worship God, the Master of the house, the Lord and Governour of the whole world: Ye must not stand looking about, and complementing with one another: nor suffer so much as your thoughts to be running after your worldly affairs, nor any thing but the work you are there engaged in, the greatest, the highest, and the hardest work ye have to do in the world. All the while that ye are upon your knees, in prayer to God, keep your minds wholly fixed upon him you are praying to, and upon your Advocate in heaven, in whose name ye pray, and for whose sake only your prayers are heard and granted. While ye are singing psalms or hymns and praises to your Almighty Creator and continual Benefactor, be sure to observe the rule which the sweet singer of *Israel* hath set you, *Sing praises lustily unto him, with a good courage*, Psal. xxxiii. 3. While ye are hearing the word of God, receive it not as the word of man, but as it is, in truth, the word of God himself, *which effectually worketh in them that believe*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. All the while that ye are at our Lord's table, consider where you are, in the most special presence of Christ your Saviour; and look upon him as in the midst of you, as he really is, and there communicating his blessed body and blood, to preserve your souls and bodies to eternal life; and accordingly receive it by faith in his word, that by eating his *flesh*, and drinking his *blood*, he dwells in you, and you in him, *John vi. 56*.

If ye would heartily and earnestly apply your minds to the use of all the means of grace, and thus employ yourselves constantly in them, as ye have occasion, ye would find them to be indeed the means of grace to you, effectual to your obtaining the favour of God, and such gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit, whereby ye shall be enabled to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, to keep all your passions in their due order, to love and honour God with all your hearts, to serve and worship him with reverence and godly fear, and to walk in all his commandments, as well as ordinances, *blameless*, all the days of your life, so as at length to go to him, and live with him for ever.

I ADD, all the days of your life, because, without that, all ye do will come to nothing. He that runs a race, unless he holds out to the end of it, can never get the prize. No more can ye, unless ye continue this your Christian course as long as ye live; for the crown is promised to none but such as do so. And therefore if ye desire in good earnest to have it, ye must follow the steps of the apostle; how far soever ye have gone, ye must forget those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before you, ye must still *press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ*, Phil. iii. 14. And never leave off, till ye are got to it. This, this is the way, the only way to *run* so that we may obtain.

AND do not say, or think within yourselves, *That is an hard saying, who can bear it?* For how hard soever it be, it must be done, or you must be undone for ever. And why should you think that hard, which ye can all do if ye will? That is all, be but willing, and you'll soon be able to do all that ye have heard: For it is no more, nor so much as men commonly do for the things of this life, and all, because they are willing to do it. If ye were but as intent upon the other world, as people generally are upon this, and as desirous of grace and glory everlasting, as they are of temporal riches and honour, you would think nothing too hard to do for the attainment of it; but would do every thing that is required towards it, with more ease and pleasure, than ye can ever find in prosecuting any worldly design. Do but make trial of it for a while, and you will find it to be so by your own experience. They who never enter'd upon this Christian race, may dream of a thousand rubs and difficulties in it; but when ye are once got into it, and have exercised yourselves for some time in it, ye will feel it to be so plain, so smooth,

so pleasant, that ye will never think that they can run fast enough, and yet will never faint nor be weary, till ye come to the end of it: or, as the scripture delights to speak, till you are *gathered to your fathers*, to the innumerable company of saints, who, while they were upon earth as you now are, ran so as to obtain the crown of glory in heaven.

Wherefore, my beloved, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God, Heb. xii. 1, 2. Where he is preparing a place, a place of joy, and bliss, and glory, more than we can imagine, for all that run so as to obtain it.

LET us therefore now resolve, by his assistance, to run for it, as others have done before, and some, we hope, are now doing. And why should not we do it as well as they? The prize is as free for us as it was for them. Let us therefore run with them, and strive which shall run fastest, and surest, without stumbling, still keeping the prize in our eye, that inestimable prize, the *crown of righteousness*, the *crown of glory*, the *incorruptible crown*, which the eternal Son of God hath purchased for us, with the price of his own blood, and is always ready to set it upon the head of all that run as they ought for it.

Which God grant that we may all do, through him, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God blessed for ever.

S E R M O N CXIX.

Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

J O H N xiv. 6.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

IT was a great privilege which the Jews had above all other people, that they had often prophets inspired and sent by God among them, to acquaint them with his will; and had always a certain way to know it upon any great occasion: For if they did but go to the high-priest, he putting on the breast plate of judgment, by the *Urim* and *Thummim* in it, perfectly understood the mind of God in the business they came about, and accordingly gave his responses or answers to it. We have no such way of consulting Almighty God under the gospel: And the reason is, because we have no need or occasion for it; for now God himself, in the form and likeness of man, hath with his own mouth revealed all things to us, that are necessary for any man to know; and hath caused such his oracles, or divine revelations, to be committed to writing,
and

and left upon record, that all may freely consult them, and from thence be informed of his will and pleasure in all things, wherein any man can be under any obligation or necessity to know it: So that if there be any doubt, scruple, or difficulty, which cannot be resolved from something that is there said and delivered to us by God himself, we may certainly conclude, that it is God's will that we should not trouble our heads about it: For he, besure, who came into the world on purpose to make and to shew us the way to happiness and salvation, hath told us all things that he would have us know; in order to our obtaining of it. And therefore what he hath told us, we may be confident it is no matter whether we know it or no: And that he would have us lay aside all such impertinent and unnecessary questions which he hath not seen good to determine, and to apply ourselves wholly to the study of such great truths as he hath revealed to us, and to take them upon his word: Looking upon that as the answer of God to all such questions which we are any way concerned to be resolved in. And if we thus consult his oracles upon any such question, we may there find as clear and certain a solution of it, as the thing is capable of.

As for example, The chief thing that we all ought to enquire after is, The way whereby we may go to him that made us, so as to have his love and favour, in which our life and happiness consisteth. This is that which *Moses*, when he had the nearest access that ever mortal had to God, desired to know of him, saying, *I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight*, *Exod. xxxiii. 13.* Where he plainly desired to know the way which God had appointed, whereby men might come to the right knowledge of him, and find grace and favour with him. Which he afterwards expressed, by saying, *I beseech thee shew me thy glory*, ver. 18. This being the way whereby God designed to manifest the glory of his grace and truth to mankind: In answer to which request, the Lord said to him, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee*, ver. 19. And accordingly, *The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the childrens children, unto the third and fourth generation*, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* which words being so solemnly proclaimed by Almighty God himself, there must needs be more in them than what is commonly thought of. To me the whole mystery of the gospel seems to be contained in them, the wonderful way which God hath made for the reconciling himself unto mankind, by his Son Jesus Christ. It is in him that God hath promised to be gracious and merciful to them. It is in him that all such promises are *yea* and *Amen*. It is in him that he is *abundant in goodness and truth*; for goodness or grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, *John i. 17.* It is in him, that God forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; and yet by no means clears the guilty, or rather, will not suffer sin to go altogether unpunished: For he hath laid the punishment of it upon him; visiting the iniquities of mankind upon his Son, as he visiteth *the iniquities of the fathers upon their children, and their childrens children, unto the third and fourth generation*; even in the highest manner that could be, so as to have full and complete satisfaction made unto him for them. Thus God shewed *Moses* his way how to find grace in his sight, even by Christ the Saviour of the world: According to the request that *Moses* had made to him: And thus *David* prayed to God, that his way might be known upon earth, and his saving health; or, as the word signifies, *his salvation unto all people*, *Psal. lxxvii. 2.* Even that way, whereby they might all be saved, by Christ the promised seed, who is our only Saviour, for there is *no salvation in any other*, *Acts iv. 12.* But he is not only our Saviour, but *salvation* itself, *Luke ii. 30.*

Thus even in the old testament God was pleased to shew men the way of salvation, at least so much of it, as render'd them inexcusable unless they walk'd in it. But in the new, it is made as plain, as words can make it: So that if we do but consult the oracles of God, which are there recorded, we cannot miss of it, but may have it from his own infallible word, how we may come to him so as to be eternally happy in him. This he hath there often told us with his own divine mouth: Particularly in my text, where the eternal

God our saviour expressly saith, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the father but by me.*

THE occasion of his uttering this divine sentence was this: he being now to leave this world, lest his disciples should be overwhelm'd with too much grief and sorrow for his departure from them, he acquainted them, that he was only going home to his own father's house, and that he went thither to prepare a place for them, and all that should believe in him. And that afterwards he would come again and receive them to himself, to live with him for ever, v. 1, 2, 3. When he had said this, taking it for granted, that they all understood him, he adds, *and whether I go ye know, and the way ye know*, v. 4. But St. Thomas, one of the twelve, not apprehending his meaning aright, said, *Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?* v. 5. Upon which our blessed saviour, according to his usual way of replying to any thing which was said to him, so as to utter something at the same time, that should not be only pertinent to that particular purpose, but likewise of universal consequence, and necessary for all mankind to know; he took occasion to utter this divine oracle, *I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the father but by me.* Whereby he certified both that apostle and all other men, not only whither he was going, even unto the father, but likewise of the way whereby they may go after him, so as at last to come unto him, even by himself. And the better to assure them of it, he doth not only say, *I am the way*, but adds, *I am the truth, and the life.* That is, the true and living way in the highest manner that can be, in the very abstract, the truth and the life it self: so that we may certainly depend upon him as the way unto the father, seeing he is the truth, and not doubt but he can carry us through that way, and bring us to the end of it, seeing he is the life too, and so can quicken, actuate, and enable us to walk in that way without fainting or stumbling. And that we may know that he is not only the way, but the only way, he adds, *no man cometh unto the father but by me.*

BUT that we may both fully understand and be duly affected with this great truth, uttered by him who is the truth it self, it will be necessary to consider, what he means by coming to the father, and how he himself is the way, and the only way, so that *no man cometh to the father but by him*, and that by him any man may come unto the father.

WHO is here meant by the father we all know, even the most high God, the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, whom our lord Jesus Christ, being his only begotten son, usually calls his father, and in general the father, as in my text: where coming to the father by him, is the same which elsewhere is expressed by *coming unto God by him*, Heb. vii. 25. But what it is for men to come to God, is not so easy to be understood.

FOR he, whom we call God, is an immense, infinite, eternal, incomprehensible Being, dwelling in that light which no man can approach unto, *whom no man hath seen nor can see*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. How then can any man ever come to him? We little worms, that creep and crawl upon the surface of the earth, how can we come to him that made both heaven and earth? to him whose glory the *heaven of heavens is not able to contain?* We who cannot get up so far as to the sun, or moon, or any of the stars, how can we ever come at him, who created and upholds them all by the power of his word, and is infinitely more above them, than they are above us? Our very thoughts, at their utmost stretch, at the greatest height they are able to ascend, are so far from reaching him, that we cannot think aright of him, but as of one that is infinitely above the highest of our thoughts. How then can we come to him? or so much as think what it is to do so? especially seeing that we are not only finite, and, as such, infinitely below him, but are likewise corrupted and defiled, and, as such, directly contrary to him. He is a most pure, just, and holy act, purity, justice, holiness it self: we are all impure, unrighteous and sinful creatures: how then can we approach to him? We that are rotten stubble, how can we come near him that is a consuming fire? We could never have thought it possible, if he himself had not told us it is. And now he hath told us of it, we could never have understood what he means by our coming unto him, unless he himself had explained it to us; but now he hath made it plain and easy to us, by acquainting us, how we

may do it, even by Jesus Christ, who being the only way, whereby we can come unto the father, we can never understand what it is to come unto the father any other way than by considering, how we may no it by him who here saith, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the father but by me.*

First, THEREFORE it is by Jesus Christ, and him only, that any man can come to the knowledge of God the father: though we have still, even in our corrupt estate, some general and confused notions of such a being presiding over the world; yet we could never have known what he is, or what we ought to believe concerning him, if Jesus Christ had not revealed him to us; as but too plainly appears, for those in the *East* and *West-Indies*, who never had his revelations any way imparted to them, before christians came among them, what unaccountable and absurd notions had they of God? What strange and ridiculous resemblances did they make of him? Some making him like one thing, some like another; some representing him under the finest, others under the ugliest shape they could think of: and all imagining him like something or other which they could see. The same was the case also of the old heathens, and of all mankind, that never had any other knowledge of God, than what corrupt nature, or their own natural reason, suggested to them; though they *knew God*, or that there was such a being in the world, yet they did not glorify him as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they became foolish, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, Rom. i. 21, 22, 23.

It is from such as these, that we must gather what to think of that natural religion which is so much cried up by some in our days, in opposition to the revealed: whatsoever they may pretend, there is nothing of true religion in it; forasmuch as mankind, by nature, have no true knowledge of the God they ought to worship, much less can they perform such worship to him, which may be properly called religion: for nothing that men do can be truly called the worshipping of God, unless it be done according to his will. But how can they know that, unless he himself hath revealed it to them? Hence it is, that they who do not believe, that God hath revealed himself and his will to mankind, as well as they who never heard of any such revelations, they all live as without God in the world; and so would all mankind have always lived, but for Jesus Christ our Lord.

BUT Jesus Christ our Lord hath made known all that is necessary, or indeed possible for mankind in this imperfect state to know, concerning God and the father: this he did of old by his *spirit* in the prophets, 1 Pet. i. 11. And hath since done it in his own person, and by his evangelists and apostles in the new testament. And that we may be sure it is he, and he alone, that hath done it, he himself hath assured us of it, with his own mouth, saying, *No man knoweth the son but the father, neither knoweth any man the father save the son, and he to whomsoever the son will reveal him*, Matth. xi. 27. And by his evangelist, saying, *No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten son, which is in the bosom of the father, he hath declared him*, John i. 18. He who alone could do it, as being the only begotten of the father, of the same form or nature with him, he hath declared, he hath revealed all that we need to know or believe concerning God, to our serving him in this world, and to our enjoyment of him in the next: and therefore he is properly called the *Sun of Righteousness*, Mal. iv. 2. and the *Light of the World*, Joh. viii. 12. cap. xix. 5. *the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, cap. i. 9. It being only by him that any man can see God, or any thing relating to the other world, as it is by the light of the sun that we see the things of this world.

AND as the light of the sun hath always heat and vigour going along with it; so hath the light of the glorious gospel of Christ: it hath so much power and efficacy, that he, by it, doth not only enlighten the medium but the eye, the eye of our minds, that we may see the wondrous things that are written in the law of God: as he opened his apostles understandings, that they might understand the scripture, Luk. xxiv. 45. and Lydia's heart, so that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul, Acts xvi. 14. So if we consult the oracles of Christ, and keep our eye fixed on him, he will not only shew us what

we ought to believe and know of God, but likewise open our hearts to receive and digest it; so that our whole souls shall be overspread with a quick sense and feeling of it. I do not say, that we shall be able to comprehend his divine nature and properties, so as to form any clear ideas or notions of him in our brains, as he is in himself: for that is impossible for us mortals to do, who have no capacities for it. And therefore they who pretend to it, or attempt it, are guilty of high presumption, and betray their pride and folly, as much, nay more, than if they should endeavour to grasp the whole heavens within the palms of their hands, before they have no true knowledge of God; for they know not so much of him, as that he is incomprehensible, and infinitely beyond the reach of their finite understandings: whereas the knowledge of God, which we are taught by Jesus Christ in his holy word, is quite of another Nature. It consists not in having ideas and speculations of him in our heads: but in having such a quick and lively sense of him in our hearts, that our whole souls are filled with admiration, and love, and fear of his divine perfections, so that we *taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come*, Heb. vi. 5. And know so as to taste, that the *Lord is gracious*, 1 Pet. ii. 3. Feeling ourselves touched to the quick, and strangely affected with his glory, power and goodness, beyond what we ourselves are able to conceive, much less express to other people.

THUS, therefore, Christ is the way to know God effectually; to know that he is *Jehovah*; being itself, existing in and of himself, and giving existence to all things else; that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, these three, are this one *Jehovah*: that he is *from everlasting to everlasting, God blessed for ever*: that he is every where, knows all things, and can do what he will: that he made all things by the word of his power, and still upholds and governs all things according to the pleasure of his will; that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without him; and that the very hairs of every man's head are numbered by him: that he is the *Lord of sabbath, the Lord of heaven and earth*, the Lord God omnipotent, that reigns and rules over the whole world, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth in it. That he is the chief, the only good in the world, in whose favour is life, in whose Presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore. All this, and far more than I am able to express, we may all know of God by his Son, who hath revealed him to us, and still doth it in us, by his Spirit moving upon our souls, and imprinting what he had revealed upon our hearts; so that we may read it there also, and be accordingly affected with it. But no man can ever attain to so much as this, even to know God and the Father, unto whom he shall come, aright, any other way, than by his Son Jesus Christ. And therefore no man, before, can come unto the Father but by him.

BUT by him we may come, not only to the knowledge, but likewise into the favour of almighty God, which is the main thing we come unto him for. And that which seems chiefly design'd by this phrase in my text; *No man cometh to the father*; that is, no man cometh to him, so as to get into his love and favour, by any other than by me. And it is well that we can do it by him; for we cannot imagine any other way how it is possible for us to do it.

FOR what other way can we propose to ourselves, whereby we can possibly find any grace or favour in the sight of God? God, as we have observed, is an infinite, almighty, eternal being, the maker of heaven and earth, the lord and governour of the whole world: we, at the best, are a company of little creatures, that were taken out of the earth, and must return to it again. How then can we expect that he should have any regard to us? *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained: Lord what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him*, Psal. viii. 3, 4. Especially if we consider withal, it was he that made us and that made us for himself, to serve and honour him. But we have not done it, nor are capable of doing it of our selves, having so far corrupted ourselves, that we are not fit for the work he made us for: and therefore are justly fallen under his displeasure; and never did, nor can do any one thing that is pleasing and acceptable in his sight: nothing but what provokes and incenseth him more against us, in not answering the end for which he made us? How then can

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we look for any kindness from him? What can we do to deserve it? and to which of the saints, to which of the angels shall we go, to restore us to the favour of God? others may think what they please; for my part I cannot imagine, how all the creatures in the world can do it. I know there are many holy, many glorious creatures in heaven, but how holy, how glorious soever they are, they are still but creatures, and, as such, infinitely below God, as I myself am. How then can I go to God? What can I say to him? How can I answer for what I have done to provoke him? *He is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgement. Neither is there any days-man, or umpire, betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both,* Job ix. 32, 33. No, certainly, tho' we had ransacked the whole creation, we could never have found one that could lay his hand both upon God and us, and so bring us together.

BUT tho' we could not, God, by his infinite wisdom and goodness, hath found one; or rather, he himself hath raised up one, on purpose to do it, even his only begotten son Jesus Christ, who being God from all eternity, of the same substance with the father; and having, in time, taken upon him the nature of man, by uniting it to his own divine person, and so being both God and man too; as God, he can lay his hand upon God; as man, he can lay it upon man; and so, as God-man, can bring them together, and make them at one again. But, for that purpose, he being thus made flesh, he offered it up as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, suffering that death, in their nature, which they themselves must otherwise have suffered, every one in his own person, for the offences which they had committed against God; and therefore he is called *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world,* Joh. i. 29. and said to be *a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world,* 1 John ii. 2. because in him, and by virtue of that propitiatory sacrifice which he once offered for mankind, God is become propitious, merciful and gracious to them, pardoning their offences, and receiving them again into his favour, *to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved,* Eph. i. 6.

THIS, I confess, is a great mystery, such as could never have entered into the heart of man, unless God himself had revealed it. But now that he hath revealed it, as we have all the ground and reason that can be to believe it, so the whole way of our coming unto God by Christ, is thereby made plain and easy to us; for though God being infinitely above us, so it is impossible for us to come immediately at him; yet he having taken upon him our nature, so as to be God and man in the same person; by applying ourselves unto him, as he is man, we come unto God too, the same person being both. So that it is, as he is man, that he is properly the way whereby we come unto God: he being, as such, the mediator between God and us, as his apostle hath taught us, saying, *there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, having given himself a ransom for all,* as it is in the original, 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. As he is the man Christ Jesus, he is the mediator between God and man: and executes that office effectually by means of the ransom that he hath given for all men; so that any man may now go unto God, though not immediately, yet by this one mediator between God and him. To the same purpose is that of St. John, *if any man sin, (as we all have) we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, &c.* 1 Joh. ii. 1, 2. Because he is the propitiation for our sins, by offering up himself, as man, in our stead, he is therefore our advocate with the father, mediating, or interceding between him and us, that our sins, whereby we have offended him, being forgiven, we may be received again into his grace and favour. And therefore as he being the only mediator between God and man, no man can come unto God, or the father, as he himself hath said, but only by him: so there is no man but by him may come unto the father; for if we first go to him, he presents us to the father, who is graciously pleased to accept of us for his sake, who brings us to him, and upon the account of that mediation which he maketh for us.

BUT how doth he present us? Not in our corrupt and sinful state, not such as we are by nature, but upon our repentance and faith in him. He first washeth us from our sins in his own blood, purgeth our consciences from *dead works,*

works, and purifieth us to himself a *peculiar people*, real and sound members of his own body, the church; and then he presents us, as such, unto God. This he himself hath taught us, by his apostle saying, *Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish*, Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. These words are much to be observed in this case, because they clearly shew, how Christ, as man, presents us to himself as God, and so how we come unto the father by him; for here we see, that he having given himself for us, and so redeemed us to himself, he first sanctifies and cleanseth, and then presents us without spot or wrinkle, or any thing that may be offensive to God, and provoke him to reject us; but that we may appear in his sight holy and without blemish, though not as we are in ourselves, yet as we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, as it follows in the text, ver. 30. *As we are joined to him, as a wife to her husband, and so are under his covert, and endowed with his righteousness, as a wife is with her husband's estate and honour.* For by this means, as the same apostle elsewhere expresseth it, we are found in him, *not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9. So that being found in him, members of his body, besides our own righteousness, which is imperfect, we have another righteousness, the righteousness of God himself, which being absolutely perfect, by that we appear and are accounted righteous before God, and he is pleased to accept of us, as such, in his son, who being united to himself by faith, and therefore interested in his merits and righteousness, afore-said.

THUS, although we were sometimes alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works, yet Christ hath now reconciled us unto God, in the body of his flesh through death, to present us holy and unblameable, and unreprieveable in his sight, Col. i. 21, 22. So that now in Christ Jesus, we who were sometimes far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ, who is our peace, Eph. ii. 13, 14. And through him we, both Jews and Gentiles, even all true believers, have access by one spirit unto the father, ver. 18. For all the sound members of Christ, being led by one and the same spirit, that which proceeds from him their head, by that they have access, and so come by him unto the father; that is, unto almighty God, who now looking upon them as righteous in his son, is so far reconciled to them, that he is become their father. And they accordingly come unto him as such. And that may be the reason wherefore our Saviour in my text doth not say, *No man cometh unto God*, but, *No man cometh unto the father but by me*, to shew, that by him we do not go unto God, as he is in himself, but as he is the father, the father of him our Lord Christ; and in him our God and our father: who therefore commands us also to address ourselves unto God, always under that relation, as he is our father which is in heaven.

BUT, Behold here what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God, 1 John iii. 1. What cause have we to admire the height, the depth, the breadth, the length of this divine love. But how came we into so near a relation to the most high God? only by his son Jesus Christ. It is he who gives this power to those who receive and believe on him, *to become the sons of God*, John i. 12. and so to come unto God as their father: as one who hath a special love and kindness for them above all the people upon earth; and will, accordingly, take care of them and bless them; defend them from all evil, and make all things work together for their good: provide all things necessary for them in this life, and then bring them to their inheritance, *an inheritance uncorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them*, 1 Pet. i. 4.

FOR being thus brought into the favour of God, by his only begotten son, in whom they believe, by him they come at last to his kingdom in heaven, there to live with him, and enjoy him for ever; and so receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, 1 Pet. i. 9. To which there is no way possible for any man to come, but only by Jesus Christ, for there is none other

name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, Acts iv. 25. But he is able to save them to the utmost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them, Heb. vii. 25.

THESE things I have endeavour'd to make as plain as I could in so few words, both for your satisfaction and my own. There being nothing that we are more concern'd to understand, than what we ought to believe and know concerning that invisible, almighty being, that made us and all the world; and how, notwithstanding our manifold provocations of him, we may regain his favour, so as to be happy in him for ever. Now, as we have seen, there is ~~no~~ way whereby it is possible for any man to do this, but only by Jesus Christ; according to what he himself here saith, *no man cometh unto the father but by me*. And therefore if any man seek it any other way, he will be so far from finding any favour with God, that he will find God more incensed against him, for offering to come unto him, and seek his favour, any other way, but that which he himself hath made and prescribed for it. The consideration whereof makes me sometimes pity the sad estate of those who *deny the Lord that bought them*, and so make themselves incapable of all those blessings that he hath bought for them.

BUT that, I hope, is not the case of any here present: you being all taught of God, that there is no way of coming thus unto him, but only by his only begotten son, your only saviour and advocate with him; and therefore you must needs be solicitous to know, what must be done on your parts, in order to it, or how you may come unto the father by the son.

First, therefore, As ever ye desire to come unto the father by the son, ye must first come unto the son, that is, you must believe in him, as he himself hath taught us, John iv. 35. Ye must believe, that he is the only begotten son of God, begotten of the father from all eternity, so as to be one with the father, John x. 30. and that in the fulness of time the father sent him into the world, to reveal his will to mankind, to reconcile them to himself, by dying in their stead, and so to be the mediator between God and man; and accordingly you must believe and trust on him, on him alone, to restore you to the favour and kingdom of God; and you must love and honour him with all your hearts for it. He that doth not this, doth not come unto the son, and therefore cannot come unto the father by him, but must *die in his sins*, John viii. 24. But God hath that infinite love for his son, that whosoever loveth and believeth in the son, is for that very reason, beloved by the father: *The father himself*, saith he, *loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God*, John xvi. 27.

BUT then you must express this your faith and love unto the son, by serving him, and doing whatsoever he hath commanded, John xiv. 15. And for that purpose you must keep close to the rule laid down by the apostle, *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the father by him*, Col. iii. 17. That is, whatsoever ye do, do it in obedience to his commands, for his sake, trusting and believing in him to direct and assist you in it, and to intercede with the father to accept of it. This is to serve the Lord Christ indeed; and therefore whatsoever is thus done, is acceptable to God through him, 1 Pet. ii. 5. and they who thus serve the son are so highly in the favour of God the father, that he honours them for it: *If any man serve me*, saith the son, *him will my father honour* John xii. 26.

ESPECIALLY in all your addresses unto God, for any grace or blessing you desire, ye must be sure to ask it only in the name of his son Jesus: for ye who have so often offended God, would never have been capable of any favour from him, unless his son had merited all ye can desire, ye have no ground to expect any thing, unless ye desire it in the name, and upon the account of his said merits, and the mediation which, by virtue thereof, he maketh for you: but that way ye may come to God, so as to obtain any thing that is good for you; for ye have his own word for that, saying, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. And therefore in all your prayers, ye must not only make use of Christ's name, as we do in all our collects; but ye must keep your minds and your faith fixed wholly upon him, firmly believing, that God, for his sake, will grant whatsoever you ask, that is really good for you, and then ye will be sure to have it, as sure as God's Word is true, so powerful is the name of Christ with almighty God. He is the son of his love,

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with whom he is well-pleased, and in whom he is therefore pleased with all those who come to him in his name. So that although no man can come unto him any other way, yet any man may thus come unto the father by the son.

AND we, as well as any other. Let us therefore now resolve to do so, as ever we desire to go unto the father, so as to be happy in the enjoyment of his love and favour, let us first go unto his son the lord Jesus, so as to become his disciples indeed, believing and practising all that he hath taught us: and let none of us doubt but he will accept of us, seeing he hath said, *him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out*, John vi. 37. In humble confidence whereof, let us therefore, by a quick and lively faith, apply our selves to him, and take all opportunities that we can get, of waiting upon him in his house, and at his holy table, that he may dwell in us, and we in him; that believing and depending stedfastly upon him, we may, by him, get up and come to God the father, so as to have him to be our God, and our father. How happy shall we then be? We shall then be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: we shall then abide under the shadow of the almighty, and have his truth to be our shield and buckler; his grace will be always sufficient for us, and his spirit ready to assist and direct us in all our ways. He will never leave us nor forsake us, but guide us by his counsel, till he receive us into glory. So that all things shall work together for our good, through the whole course of our pilgrimage upon earth, and then we shall come to God in heaven, and there live with him, behold him, adore him, and enjoy him for ever. And all through him, by whom we come unto him, even the ever-blessed Jesus, our only mediator and advocate. To whom be glory, now and for ever.

S E R M O N CXX.

Christ a Saviour before his Incarnation.

J O H. V. 17.

But Jesus answered them, my father worketh hitherto, and I work.

W H E N our blessed saviour was upon earth, as never man spake as he spake, so never man did as he did: he went about doing good, the best that could be done; and that too, notwithstanding all the calumnies and reproaches that were cast upon him for it: which were so far from discouraging him, that he turned them also into opportunities of doing more good unto the world; for we never find the Jews saying any thing against him, but he still took occasion from thence, of saying something for the better instructing mankind in the knowledge of God, of himself, and of the way that leads to life: as particularly in this place; our saviour having cured a sick man, (as he made the world) by the word of his mouth, only saying, *Rise, take up thy bed and walk*; and this being done on the sabbath-day, the Jews began to rail against him, and persecute him, as one that had broken the sabbath, the day on which God rested from all his Works, and

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commanded men to do so too. To which our saviour answers, so as, at the same time, to reveal several great truths, which were necessary for them and all mankind to know. And he begins his answer with this divine saying, *My father worketh hitherto*; as if he had said, although God rested upon the seventh-day, from all his works which he had made, so as never to create or produce any more species or kinds of things out of nothing, yet he still worketh in preserving, governing and disposing all things that he hath made, and that too upon the sabbath, as well as upon other days; for he did not appoint the sabbath for himself, but for you to observe, by resting from your own works, not from his. You are still bound to do good upon the sabbath-day, as he doth every day alike: *He worketh*, in the present tense, and therefore continually, in every moment of time, and he thus continually worketh hitherto, from the beginning of the world to this day.

THIS was a sufficient confutation of the *Jewish* cavil. Howsoever, he, out of his abundant goodness, took his opportunity of acquainting them with two very great and necessary truths: *First*, that God is his father; *my father*, saith he, which he expressed so, as that the *Jews* themselves understood, (though the *Arians* could not) that he thereby *made himself equal with God*, ver. 13. And, *Secondly*, that he himself worketh continually as the father doth; *my father*, saith he, *worketh hitherto, and I work*. Whereby he gives us to understand, not only that he, as the eternal son and wisdom of the father, always worketh together with him, and doth whatsoever the father doth, ver. 19. but likewise that he continually worketh also as he is Jesus, the saviour of the world. For, as such, he spake these words, *and Jesus answered them, my father worketh hitherto, and I work*. As if he had said, as my father, the creator and governour of the world hath been all along doing, and still doth, whatsoever he pleaseth in it, and whensoever he pleaseth to do it; so I, the saviour of the world, have always been, and still am working the salvation of mankind, continually doing all such things as are necessary to my bringing those who believe in me to heaven.

THE consideration of which great truth being of extraordinary use, both to the informing our judgments aright, concerning our blessed saviour, and to the confirming our faith in him, in order to our salvation by him; I shall, by his assistance, endeavour to make it as plain and clear as I can unto you, by shewing, that he hath all along from the beginning of the world, and so before, as well as after his incarnation, been carrying on, and accomplishing the great work of man's salvation. And for that purpose shall, first, enquire into what grounds we have to believe this truth in general, even, that Jesus Christ was the saviour of mankind, before he actually took our nature upon him: and then shall shew more particularly what he did all along for that end, that men might be saved by him, and so how truly he said, *my father worketh hitherto and I work*; which being things purely of divine revelation, in speaking to them, I must confine myself to such arguments which are to be found in God's own word, that is, not only the most certain, but the only certain ground we have, whereupon to build any article of our christian faith.

Now, in order to our proving that Jesus Christ was the saviour of mankind, before he actually took our nature upon him, we must first suppose, that some men were saved before that time. This we may well suppose, it being that which all that believe the scriptures agree in; so that we need not insist upon the proving of it. But this being taken, as it must be, for granted, it necessarily follows, that Jesus Christ was then also the saviour of the world, for there never was any other way whereby men could be saved but by him. This we are fully assured of by St. Peter, where, speaking of Christ, he saith, *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. which words are so plain and express, that I do not see how it is possible that this great truth should be more clearly revealed to us: for if there ever had been any other way, whereby mankind could have been saved, there must have been salvation in some other besides Christ, which the apostle here expressly denies, as well he might; forasmuch as there is no way possible for men to be saved, unless almighty God be first reconciled to them. But there is none could ever do that but only Christ, for *there is one God*, saith St. Paul, *and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ*.

Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. From whence it appears, that as there is but one God, so there is but one mediator between God and men, to make up all differences, so as to reconcile God to men, and men to God, and that is no other but Jesus Christ, who for that purpose gave himself a ransom for all; which he need not have done, if any could ever have been saved without him.

AND hence also it is, that God, who would have all men to be saved, was pleased to make known the gospel, or glad tidings of salvation, by Christ unto the world, long before he himself was born into it, yea, from the very beginning of it; which need not have been, if men could have been saved any other way: for this we have the testimony of the apostle to the *Hebrews*, where, speaking of those indefinitely that lived before Christ's incarnation, he saith, *For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* Heb. iv. 2. For if the gospel was preached unto us, as well as unto them, it was preached unto them as well as unto us: and the only reason, it seems, why any of them were not saved, was, not because the gospel was not sufficiently preached to them, but because they did not rightly believe it. To the same purpose is that of St. Peter, *For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, and live according to God in the spirit,* 1 Pet. iv. 6. To them that are dead, that is, to those that were dead long before, as well as to such as were then alive, soon after our Lord's ascension: to them also was the gospel preached, the same gospel; for there is but one gospel from the beginning to the end of the world: therefore called the *Everlasting Gospel*, Rev. xiv. 6. And as St. Paul saith, *though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, than what we have preached unto you, let him be accursed,* Gal. i. 8, 9.

BE sure the apostles preached no other gospel, than that which had been preached before by the prophets: St. Paul positively affirms, that he said *none other things than what the prophets and Moses did say should come,* Act. xxvi. 22. And elsewhere he saith, *εὐαγγελιζόμεθα*, we preach unto you the gospel, even the promise made unto the fathers, that God hath fulfilled the same to us their children; for so the words should be rendered, *Acts* xiii. 32, 33. It was the same gospel therefore, that both the prophets and the apostles preached. What the prophets declared to be promised by God, the apostles declare it to be fulfilled in Christ. But still the Gospel, or thing promised, was the same in both: and therefore the apostles all along appealed to the prophets, to confirm the truth of what they taught; and so did Christ himself, *search the scriptures,* saith he, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me,* John v. 40. And after his resurrection, he said to his disciples, *these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me,* Luk. xxiv. 44. where we may observe, that he appeals to all the three parts of the old testament, as bearing witness to what he had said and done. And then it follows, *he opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures; and said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem,* ver. 45, 46, 47.

IF our blessed saviour would be pleased to open our understandings, as he did his disciples at that time, we also should understand the scriptures of the old testament as they did, even so as to see all the great truths of the gospel there also revealed and made known to mankind; and particularly that which he himself here mentioneth, as the sum and substance, of all the rest, even, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.* For what doth the gospel promise more than the pardon of our sins when we have repented, and grace to repent of them, that they may be pardoned in Christ? yet our saviour here speaks of both these things as revealed and promised also in the old testament. And so verily they are both together, *Jer.* xxxi. 33, 34. and very often apart; as for the pardon of our sins by Christ, *to him,* as St. Peter said, *give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins,* Acts x. 43. And it is a great mistake to

think, as some have done, that God promised only temporal blessings under the old testament; for there is nothing more frequently promised there than the assistance of God's grace and holy spirit to enable them to repent and turn to him, *Isa. lix. 21. Ezek. xi. 19. cap. xxxvi. 26, 27. Zach. xii. 10. Jer. xxxii. 39, &c.*

BUT to prove this, we need instance only in that famous promise which God made to *Abraham*, saying, *In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Gen. xii. 3. c. xxii. 18.* In which one promise, both grace and pardon, and all the blessings of the gospel, were comprehended: for *St. Peter* having quoted this promise to the *Jews*, the better to explain it to them, he immediately adds, *Unto you, first, God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities, Acts iii. 25, 26.* This therefore was one of the great blessings design'd in that promise. But *St. Paul*, having occasion to speak of *Abraham*, saith, *And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed, Gal. iii. 8.* where we plainly see, that pardon or justification by faith was all contained in this promise, and that when God made this promise, he thereby preached the gospel to *Abraham*, the same gospel which we now profess, and in which we hope to be justified by faith in *Christ*, of the seed of *Abraham*, according to the said promise or covenant; which, as the apostle there saith, *was confirmed of God in Christ, ver. 16, 17.* and so indeed are all promises whatsoever, that God hath made to mankind: they were all made and all confirmed in *Christ*, according to that of the apostle, *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen. 2 Cor. i. 20.* And therefore not only that which God made to *Abraham*, but every other promise that he ever made to any man, supposed and implied *Christ* to be then in being, as a saviour of mankind, and so was a kind of publishing or preaching his gospel to the world.

TO this we might add, that the prophets themselves often speak of preaching the gospel. The word they use for it is, *בשר* which the *Septuagint* often translate by *εὐαγγελίζεσθαι*, the same word that was used in the new testament for preaching the gospel. And so it plainly signifies in several places, as *Psal. xl. 9. Isa. xl. 9. c. xli. 27. c. lxi. 1.* But I shall instance only in that of the prophet *Isaiah*, *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, &c. Isa. lii. 7.* For this *St. Paul* himself interprets of preaching the gospel, the same gospel that he preached: where, speaking of those who are to do it, he saith, *How can they preach except they be sent?* as it is written, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things?* *Rom. x. 15.* And then he adds, *But they have not all obeyed the gospel;* for *Esaias* saith, *Lord, who hath believed our report?* ver. 16. which plainly shews, that the same gospel which the apostle preached, was preached also by the prophets, and that the people were much to be blamed for not believing it; which they could not have been, if it had not been sufficiently preached to them.

BUT though some did not, others did believe the gospel as it was then preached, so as earnestly to expect and long to see the promises accomplished. This *Christ* himself told his disciples, saying, *Verily, I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them, Matt. xiii. 17.* The disciples saw *Christ* in the flesh, and heard him preach the gospel with his own mouth. And though the prophets and righteous persons of old did not do so, yet they desired it; which they could not have done, unless they had believed, that he would come in the flesh and dwell among us, according to the promises that God had made them. And though they did not see those promises actually fulfilled, yet *they saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them*, as the apostle tells us, *Heb. xi. 13.* This they did by a true gospel-faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, ver. 1. Thus *Esaias* saw *Christ's* glory, and spake of him, *Joh. xii. 41. Isa. vi. 1.* Thus *Abraham* rejoiced to see *Christ's* day; he saw it, and was glad, *Joh. viii. 56.* Thus *Job* saw *Christ*, when he said, *I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, Job xix, 25.* He did not only know that *Christ* would stand at the latter day upon the earth, but he saw him as it were living at that time, as his God, or redeemer; I know

know that my redeemer liveth, that he liveth now. Thus *Moses* also saw him so as to esteem the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, Heb. xi. 26. And wrote so clearly of him, that Christ himself said to the Jews, *had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me*, John v. 46. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days, and things belonging unto Christ, as St. Peter informed them, Acts iii. 24. And therefore they who did not believe, were justly accused, condemned and punished for their unbelief, for their not believing in Christ, notwithstanding that God had so fully revealed him to them, by his prophets. As appears also from St. John, where, speaking of Christ, he saith, *though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake; Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?* John xii. 37, 38. Where the evangelist, as well as the apostle, in the place before quoted, plainly interprets their not believing the reports of the prophets, to be the same with their not believing in Christ; which could not be, if the prophets had not reported Christ unto them so as that they were bound to believe in him.

BUT they, doubtless, were as much bound to believe in Christ as we are; for they had the same ground to do it, that we have. The only ground that we have to believe in him, for our salvation, is, because we have the word of God for it, which is the highest and firmest ground we can have to believe any thing at all: but they had the same word of God for it, that we have, and therefore must needs be obliged to believe in him, as much as we are at this day. And so, be sure, all the saints of God in all ages, from the beginning of the world, did; they all believed in Christ alone for their salvation as we now do, or at least ought to do. What greater expression can there be of faith in God our saviour, than to say, *the Lord is my strength, and song, and he is become my salvation*: he is become, he is already become my saviour, yea, my salvation itself, all things necessary to my being saved; yet this was used by *Moses*, Exod. xv. 2. by *David*, Psal. cxviii. 14. And by *Esaias*, Isa. xii. 2. And by all in the same words, though they lived in ages so distant from one another; which makes me think that this ran through the whole church of Christ in all ages, and was used as a standing form of expressing their faith in him, and their thanks unto God for him. How confidently also doth *David*, call God, *his God, the God of his righteousness, his saviour, his deliverer, his redeemer, his light, his rock, his strength, his tower, his defence, his refuge, the horn of his salvation, and his salvation itself?* How positively doth he assert, that the Lord shall redeem Israel from all his sins, Psal. cxxx. 58. And as for our iniquities, *thou, O Lord, shalt purge them away*, Psal. lxxv. 3. תְּכַפֵּר thou shalt expiate, or make propitiation for them: whom can he mean by all this, but the Lord our righteousness, that lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world? How frequently doth he profess that he will trust in the Lord? and how earnestly doth he call upon others to do so? What is, if this be not, to believe in God our saviour? For my part, I know not how it is possible for any of us to do it better. God grant we may do it as well; for this is the way to be justified before God as they of old were, even by faith in Christ: And therefore St. Paul, discoursing of our justification by faith in Christ, brings in *Abraham* as a great example of it, of whom it is said, that *Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*, Rom. iv. 3. Gal. iii. 6. It was by this means that all the righteous persons, under the law, were made and accounted righteous, even by their believing in God our saviour. And if we believe but as they did, we also shall be justified and saved as they were; according to that remarkable saying of St. Peter concerning them, *but we believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they*, or as it is in the original, καὶ ὁμοτρόποι καὶ σωθήσονται, after the same manner as they, Acts xv. 11. Which words do of themselves sufficiently confirm this great truth, that all who were ever saved, from the beginning of the world, till Christ came into it, were saved only by him, as we hope to be; and by consequence, that Christ having been all along bringing men to salvation, he might well say, *my father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

BUT to understand this more clearly, we must consider, in the next place, the several offices which he undertook and executed all along for mankind, as he

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was a priest, a prophet, and a king. I place the priesthood first, because the other were founded upon that; for if he had not first, as a priest, offered up to God a sufficient sacrifice, whereby to make atonement and reconciliation for the sins of mankind, he could not, as a prophet, have revealed the will of God unto them, nor, as a king, have ruled and governed them according to it: for these are such mercies that mankind would not have been capable of; no more than the fallen angels are, who never having had a priest to expiate their sins, never did, nor ever will, receive any mercy at the hands of God. Which seems to me an undeniable argument, that God never shews any mercy but only in Christ, and for his sake; who having not taken upon *him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*, by being made flesh, and having in that made propitiation for mankind. Almighty God, tho' he be not so to the fallen angels, yet he is propitious and merciful to fallen men, so far as both to shew them the way to life, and to enable them to walk in it. Both which God our saviour hath done, and still doth; the first as a prophet, the other as a king, but both by virtue of that sacrifice which he, as a priest, offer'd for them from the beginning of the world.

It is true, he did not actually take the nature of man upon him, and offer it up for a sacrifice, till about 4000 years after the creation. But the sacrifice which he then offer'd, look'd backward as well as forward, to the time past as well as that which was to come, *for the remission of sins that are past*, as St. Paul saith, *Rom. iii. 25.* or, *for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*, as the apostle to the *Hebrews*, *Heb. xix. 15.* And if for these that were under the first testament, then from the beginning of the world, when that testament was made. Which is so certain and undeniable, that the same apostle brings this as an argument to prove, that Christ needed not to offer himself often, as the high-priest, under the law, entered into the holy place every year; because if so, then he must often have suffered since the foundation of the world, *Heb. ix. 26.* which plainly supposeth, that this one oblation of himself, once offered, was sufficient to expiate all sin from the foundation of the world, and that no sin was ever expiated but by that. To the same purpose is that of St. John, where he speaks of some whose names were not written in the book of life, *of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, *Apoc. xiii. 8.* From whence it doth not only appear, that Christ, here called the Lamb, was look'd upon as slain; so that his death was every way as effectual from the foundation of the world, as after he actually suffered. But it appears also from hence, that he from the foundation of the world, had the book of life written, not only as he was God, but as he was the lamb, *the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*, *John i. 29.* Yea, that *was the propitiation for the sins of the whole world*, *1 John ii. 2.* And if of the whole world, then from the beginning to the end of it; otherwise it could not be the whole. Hence the prophets speak of Christ's sufferings as past, *Isa. liii. 5, 6.*

NEITHER will this seem strange to any that consider, that God, at the beginning of the world, said, *that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*, and the serpent should *bruise his heel*, *Gen. iii. 13.* that is, that Christ should destroy the works of the devil, but that he himself should be bruised or put to death, in his lower part, in his human nature, as he was the seed of the woman. Which being then said by God, who cannot lie, it was as certain as if it was already done, or rather, it was already done in the eye of God, to whom all things are present. From that time forward, therefore, Christ was a propitiation for the sins of the world, by virtue of that death which he was afterwards to suffer. Afterwards, I say, not in respect of God, but only in respect of men, who are measured by time; for whose sakes, therefore, God was pleased to appoint beasts to be slain, and offered up in sacrifice to him, as types and representatives of that sacrifice which his son was to offer up unto him for their sins, until it should be actually done in their sight, as it was from the beginning in his. And hence it is, that all nations that have had any sense of religion left, have been always accustomed to sacrifice living creatures to the God they worshipped. Which custom having no foundation in reason, or the light of nature, could proceed from nothing else, but some general tradition which they had received from their common head, from Noah, and he from Adam, and Adam from God: for it could never have come into his, or any man's head, to think that the

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taking away the life, which he gave to his creatures, should be an acceptable service to their creator, unless he himself had been pleased to institute and ordain it: as he did, to put mankind continually in mind of the great sacrifice which his son was to offer for them, and of the benefits they might receive thereby. Which being, nevertheless, in process of time, very much forgotten by them, or not rightly understood, he was afterwards pleased to appoint such rites and ceremonies to be observed by the priests, about their sacrifices in the levitical law, as would clearly represent both the death, which Christ was to suffer in their stead, and the great blessings which he procur'd for them by virtue thereof: for they, as the apostle saith, *served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished by God, when he was about to make the tabernacle; for see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount*, Heb. viii. 5. Exod. xxv. 9, 40. From whence we may observe, that when *Moses* was in the mount, it was there shewed him, how all things relating to the sacrifice of Christ, were transacted in heaven; and he was commanded to represent them all in the tabernacle he was to make, and the service belonging to it. Now, to pass by other things, we find that in the tabernacle, he made one place, called the most holy, wherein he put the ark, that had the tables of the covenant in it, and the cherubim over-shadowing the mercy-seat above it. After this he ordered, that upon every day of expiation, the high-priest should kill a bullock and a goat for a sin-offering, and should carry some of the blood into the said holy place, and there sprinkle it before and upon the mercy-seat, and by that means make atonement and reconciliation for *all the congregation of Israel*, Lev. xvi. 14, 15, 18. All which being according to the pattern which was shewed in the mount, plainly signified, that Christ having offer'd up his sacrifice upon earth, went into the true holy place, into heaven itself, and there continually, by virtue of the blood he shed, makes atonement and reconciliation for all his faithful people, that God would pardon their sins, and receive them into his grace and favour again. And this he hath done, as our true high-priest all along; and therefore might well say, *my father worketh hitherto, and I work; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us*, Heb. vii. 25.

AND as Christ hath been always a high-priest, to make propitiation and atonement for the sins of mankind, so he hath been always a prophet too, to reveal the will of God unto them. He is expressly called a prophet, *Deut. lviii. 15. Acts iii. 22, 23.* and may well be so, all other prophets being made and sent by him, as his *Amanuenses* to write, and his heralds to proclaim what he dictated to them. As when *Samuel* was made a prophet it is said, *the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the word of the Lord*, 1 Sam. iii. 21. The Lord, by the word of the Lord, that is, by his son, who is often called the word in the old as well as the new testament: it was by him, therefore, that *Samuel* had the will of God revealed to him. To the same purpose is that of *David*, *the spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. But that Christ, by his holy spirit, moved the prophets, and spake by them, we are fully assured by the same spirit in *St. Peter*, saying, *of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what, and what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify*, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. He speaks of the prophets indefinitely, and so of all the prophets, that the spirit of Christ was in them. Afterwards he saith, that Christ by his spirit, *went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient in the days of Noah*, 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. He therefore was a prophet in the days of *Noah*, and preached then by his spirit in him, who is therefore said to be *a preacher of righteousness*, 2 Pet. ii. 5.

BUT to prove this we need go no further than the prophets themselves; for we there find Christ himself speaking in them, so as that the words cannot be otherwise understood, than as spoken by him. I shall instance only in such places which we are sure are meant of him, in that they are applied to him in the new testament: as where he saith, *the Lord said unto me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee*, Psal. ii. 7. Acts. xiii. 23. Heb. i. 5. *Sacrifices and offerings thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hast not required: then said I, lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me*, Psal. xl. 6, 7. Heb. x. 5. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me*, Mal. iii. 1. Matt. xi. 10. *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted*, Isa. lxi. 1. Luk. iv. 18. *They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots*, Psal. xxii. 18.

Mat. xxvii. 35. *They gave me gall to eat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink*, Psal. lxxix. 21. John xix. 28, 29. *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced*, Zech. xii. 10. John xix. 34, 37. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*, Psal. xvi. 10. Acts ii. 31. c. xiii. 35. There are many such places, where Christ spoke as plainly by the prophets in the old testament, as ever he did with his own mouth in the new. I shall name only one more, that is concerning the thirty pieces of silver, for which our Lord was sold, and with which they bought the *Potter's Field*. Now observe how it is worded in the prophet; *And the Lord said unto me, cast it unto the Potter, a good price that I was prized at by them*, Zech. xi. 13. Mat. xxvii. 9, 10. The Lord who said this to him could be no other but the Lord Christ. It was he therefore whom this and all the prophets mean, when they say, *Thus saith the Lord*. And whensoever they were moved by the Holy Ghost to say any thing, they were always moved by him, as proceeding from and sent by the son. To whom therefore we are beholden for all the revelations of God and his holy will, that were ever made to mankind since the beginning of the world. For as he himself saith, *No man knoweth the father but the son, and he to whomsoever the son will reveal him*, Mat. xi. 27. and therefore might well say in this respect also, *my father worketh hitherto, and I work*.

AND as Christ thus acted all along as a priest and a prophet, so likewise as a king, yea, as *king of kings, and lord of lords*, 1 Tim. vi. 15. Rev. xvii. 24. cap. xix. 16. King David himself calls him his Lord, *the Lord said unto my Lord*, Psal. cxx. 1. Mat. xxii. 44. The Hebrew word is מְלִיכָה one of the proper names of God, which is often used concerning God the son, as particularly by Daniel, where he beseecheth God to hear his prayer, *For the Lord's sake*, Dan. ix. 17. That is, as we use to say, for Christ Jesus sake, for the words cannot possibly be understood of any other; and therefore shew, that the saints of old prayed, as we now do, in the name of Christ. Vid. Eccles. li. 10.

THERE are many places in the old testament that speak of Christ's kingdom as then in being. I shall mention but two or three. The first shall be, that where it is said, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre; thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity, therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee*, &c. Psal. xlv. 6, 7. This the apostle saith, was said to the son, Heb. i. 8. And it could be said to no other; for he to whom it is said, is called God, *thy throne, O God*. And yet he is said to be anointed by God, by his God, which could be true of none, but him who is God of Gods: and though he be God himself, yet he often calls God, his God, Matt. xxix. 46. John xx. 17.

ANOTHER place may be that in David's last words, where, after many extraordinary expressions, to shew the height of the matter he was now to utter, he saith, מוֹשֵׁל בָּאָדָם צְדִיק which we translate, *he that ruleth over men must be just*, much too low, and flat for such a lofty preface. But the words may, or rather, according to the Hebrew tongue, ought to be rendred, *A righteous person ruleth over men, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning*, &c. 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4. Which last words are acknowledg'd to be meant of Christ: and then the other must needs be understood of him too; and so are an illustrious assertion of that kingdom and government, which Christ the righteous, even then administered over men.

To these we may add, that in the second Psalm, where Christ is named, and which is applied to him in the new testament, Acts iv. 25. cap. xiii. 33. Heb. i. 5. there it is said, *I have set my king*; or, as the LXX, and some other translations render it, *I am set a king upon my holy hill of Zion*, Psal. ii. 6. Christ therefore was the king that dwelt in Zion: but Zion was the place where the ark stood in the holy of holies, with the mercy-seat and the two cherubims over it; from between which the Lord communed with Moses, *of all things which he gave him in commandment unto the children of Israel*, Exod. xxv. 22. Num. vii. 89. Wherefore this must needs be the Lord Christ, it being he who was set a king in Zion, presentiating himself there, as sitting upon the mercy-seat, or throne of grace, and issuing forth his royal edicts from between the cherubims: and therefore it was he also, whom the same prophet means, when he saith, *the Lord reigneth, let the people tremble, he sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved. The Lord is great in Zion, and high above all people*, Psal. xcix. 1, 2.

It would be endless to reckon up all the places where Christ's kingdom is spoken of in the old testament. Neither would it be so much to our present purpose, as to consider

consider how he exercised his regal power, in some of the most plain and sensible instances which are there recorded of it; for which end, we may first observe, that when three persons appear'd to *Abraham*, he addresseth himself unto them all as one, saying, *my Lord*, Gen. xviii. 2, 3. And that it was the true God, appears from his being called *Jehovah*, the Lord, ver. 1. But that it was God the son he spoke to, appears from *Abraham's* saying to him, *shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* ver. 25. *For the father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the son*, John v. 22. And it was the son, who then, as a righteous king, executed his judgment upon *Sodom and Gomorrah*; for it is said, *then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven*, Gen. xix. 24. It was the Lord that did it, from the Lord; they were both equally the same *Jehovah, the Lord*; and yet so far distinct, that the one did it from the other, which cannot be otherwise understood, than that the son did it from the father: whereby he clearly manifested his supreme authority and power.

AND so he did upon many other occasions: it was he that wrestled with *Jacob*, and delivered him from his troubles, for he that did it, is said to be a man, Gen. xxxii. 24. And is called God too, ver. 28, 29. He blessed *Jacob*, and gave him the name of *Israel*, one that prevailed with God, ver. 28. *Hos. xii. 3.* And in his prayer for *Joseph's* sons, *Jacob* said, *the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads*, Gen. xlviii. 16. For it is Christ alone that is our *גואל* redeemer, and from whom all blessings come.

It was he that deliver'd the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and led them thro' the wilderness. For he that did it, is sometimes called an *Angel*, Exod. xiv. 19. cap. xxiii. 20. sometimes *Jehovah, the Lord*, cap. xiii. 21. cap. xiv. 24. and sometimes the *presence*, or rather the *face of God*, cap. xxxiii. 14, 15. that is, the son, who is the *image of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Col. i. 15. the express *image of his person*, Heb. i. 3. such an image, *that he who seeth the son, seeth the father*, John xiv. 9.

It was he that fed them, and gave them water, where there was neither rain nor spring, nor river; *For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ*, 1 Cor. x. 4.

It was he whom they tempted in the wilderness, as we learn from the same apostle, saying, *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents*, 1 Cor. x. 9.

It was he that brought them into the land of *Canaan*; for the man that appeared to *Joshua* for that purpose was likewise captain or prince of the host of the Lord, Josh. v. 13, 14. Which could be none but Christ, to whom *angles, and authorities, and powers*, even the whole host of heaven, are made subject, 1 Pet. iii. 22.

AND when they were come into the land of *Canaan*, he was still their king; for when they desired another, he said, they had rejected him, that he *should not reign over them*, 1 Sam. viii. 7. And their kingdom is called *the kingdom of the Lord*, 2 Chron. xiii. 8. For the better administration whereof, he ordered the *Urim and Thummim* to be put into the breast-plate of the high-priest, that his subjects might consult him there, to know his royal pleasure in all publick affairs of the kingdom, Exod. xxviii. 30. Num. xxvii. 21. as we read they often did. But that the *Urim and Thummim* belonged to Christ, and that it was he that gave his answers from thence to all that consulted him as their king, appears from these words of *Moses*, *And of Levi he said, thy Thummim and thy Urim are לאיש המדבר for the man, thy holy one.* So Christ is called, *thou wilt not suffer חטיון thy holy one to see corruption*, Psal. xvi. 10. And that it was he whom *Moses* there means, appears also from the following Words, *thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah*, Deut. xxxiii. 8. For that it was Christ whom they proved and tempted in the wilderness, is plain from the words of St. Paul before-quoted, 1 Cor. x. 9.

THUS Christ, for a long time, was pleased to manifest his regal power to and for his people, in a wonderful manner, that they and all might see and know, that it is he that governs and defends his church in all ages, so that the gates of hell never did, nor ever shall prevail against it. But for that purpose he exercised this his power, not only for his church in general, but in every particular member of it, by ruling their hearts, and keeping them stedfast in the true faith and fear of God: this he did all along from the beginning of the world, when it was said, *that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*: from that time forward he hath been always destroying the kingdom of Satan, and erecting and governing his own,

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in the hearts of all that believed in him, mortifying their sins, and quickening them to renews of life, with such influences of his grace and holy spirit, whereby they have been enabled, notwithstanding all the temptations of the devil, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

HENCE it is, that we read of so many righteous persons in the old testament, as well as in the new. They were all made so by Christ, and accepted of as such, only through him, whom God *hath exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*, Acts v. 31. They were both always in his gift: it was he that gave them repentance, and it was he that forgave their sins; as appears also from his saying, *that we may know that the son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins*, Matt. ix. 6. plainly implying, that he had this power before in heaven. And as he had it, so he exercised it upon all that truly repented and turned unto him, in all ages of the world: by him they were pardoned and justified, or accounted righteous before God. The prophet could call him, *the Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6. as well as the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 30. So that God the father, ever since the creation, hath been always governing the whole world, and ordering and disposing of all things in it: so God the son hath been always governing his whole church, and sanctifying, justifying, and at last glorifying all the true members of it; and therefore might truly say, as he doth in my Text, *my father worketh hitherto, and I work*.

Now, from these things, thus briefly touch'd upon, we may first observe, the exact agreement there is between the books of the old and new testament; which must needs be all dictated by the same divine spirit, seeing, although written so many ages, one after another, yet they all agree in that which no man could otherwise have thought of, even that the only way whereby any man ever was, or ever can be sav'd, is by *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8.

FROM hence also we may see, what reason our church hath to declare in her articles, *that the old testament is not contrary to the new*; for both in the old and new testament, everlasting life is offer'd to mankind by Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man, being both God and man. *Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign, that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises*. Art. VII.

Lastly, WE may learn from hence, what firm ground we have to believe in Christ for our salvation, seeing he is such an almighty saviour, that he is able to save to the utmost, all that come to God by him, from the beginning, as well as to the end of the world. Let us therefore now resolve to do so: let us believe, and trust on him alone for grace and pardon, and all things necessary to our salvation, that we also may join hereafter with the twelve thousand of every tribe in *Israel*, and with the innumerable company of glorified saints of all other nations, in that celestial anthem we find them singing in the *Revelations*, cap. vii. 10. *Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever*. Amen.

S E R M O N CXXI.

The presence of Christ in religious assemblies of christians.

M A T T. xviii. 20.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

IF our blessed saviour was upon earth now, what flocking would there be from all parts to see him? and if he was but in any part of this kingdom, how remote soever, which of us but should strive to go to him? what haste should we make, what pains should we take, to get as near him as we could, that we might not only see him, but enjoy his company, and hear some of his divine discourses from his own mouth? with that profound reverence should we approach into his presence? how attentively should we hearken to every word that came from him? how glad should we be to see him smiling upon us, and owning us for his servants and disciples? and when we had been a while in his company, how loth should we be to leave it? how apt should we be to cry out, as St. Peter did at his transfiguration, *Lord, it is good for us to be here*, Matt. xvii. 4.

THIS, perhaps, may be thought a vain and groundless supposition. And so it is, if we speak only of Christ's bodily presence: for his body is now in heaven, and will continue there till the last day; and therefore we have no ground to expect that we shall ever see it upon earth till then.

BUT howsoever, there is a way, whereby we may meet with our blessed saviour every day in the year, and enjoy his presence as effectually to all intents and purposes, as if he now dwelt among us, as he did once among the *Jews* in our own nature. For though in that nature, he is now in heaven, there appearing in the presence of God for us; yet he that is in that nature, is always present with his church upon earth too: we may be confident of it; more confident than we could be of his body being any where upon earth, if it really was so: for if it was so, we could hear of it only from men, who might be deceived themselves, or else might have a mind to deceive us; and so we could never be fully assured that it was really Jesus Christ. But that he is always present with his church, we have his own infallible word: for immediately before he went up in his body to heaven, he said to his apostles, as such, and by consequence to all that should ever succeed them in the instruction and government of his church in all ages, *Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20. Whereby he hath given them and us, as great assurance as could be given, that altho' his body was now to be taken from them, yet that he himself would still continue with them, *πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας*, every day, continually, without intermitting so much as one day, so long as the world shall last.

BUT though he be present with his church in general, as it is here militant upon earth, where we may in particular meet with him, and find him present, upon any

occasion that we may have to address our selves to him? This is a thing which we are all highly concerned to know, and therefore he himself also hath been pleased to acquaint us with it, not only by his prophets and apostles, but with his own mouth, in these words, *where two or three are gather'd together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

THERE are none, I suppose, here present, but who have often read these words, or at least have heard them read over and over again. But I fear there are but few that have taken that notice of them which they deserve, both for his sake who spake them, and for the matter contained in them: wherefore it will be worth the while, to look a little more narrowly into them, and to consider both the true meaning of them, and the great use and advantage that is to be made of them, by all who firmly believe them as they ought.

FOR this purpose, therefore, we may first observe, that our blessed saviour having here given us directions how to carry ourselves towards an offending brother, even, that we first reprove him privately, then before witnesses, and if he neglect to hear them, then to tell it to the church, and having assured us, that what the church doth in the case on earth, the same shall be done in heaven, saying, *whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,* Mat. xviii. 18. Our Lord, I say, having said this, he takes occasion from thence to speak of all church-assemblies, where any of his disciples meet to present their petitions to almighty God, saying, *again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven,* Mat. xviii. 19. As if he had said, as whatsoever is done in the case before-mentioned by the church on earth, shall be ratified and confirmed in heaven; so whatsoever any, though the least number of christians, shall agree together to pray for upon earth, it shall be granted in heaven.

WHERE we may observe, by the way, that this promise is not made to such assemblies, where one prays *extempore*, for that which comes next into his mind, or upon his tongue; for in that case, he himself that prays, doth not know beforehand what he shall pray for, much less can the congregation know it. And if they do not know it, they cannot possibly agree together upon what they shall ask, as our saviour here requires they should, if they would have it granted: and thereby hath plainly signified it to be his will and pleasure, that his disciples, in all their solemn assemblies, should use such prayers which they know before-hand, and have agreed together to have them presented to the most high God in his name; who hath here promised, that such publick prayers shall be heard, but not that any other shall be so. And hence it is, that his churches in all places and ages of the world, (till very lately) hath constantly used set-forms of prayer, which were agreed upon before as fit and proper to be offered up to God, and which the whole congregation, therefore, accordingly agree to ask of him, whensoever they meet together before him; as we now do in our publick liturgy: and therefore have Christ's own word for it, that what we so pray for upon earth, shall be done for us by his father which is in heaven.

BUT now, lest this should seem strange, that what we poor mortals desire upon earth, should be granted in heaven, our blessed Lord is pleas'd to give us the reason of it, in my text, saying, *for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* Whereby he gives us to understand, that as he appears in the presence of God for us, in heaven, so he is likewise present in all such assemblies as are gathered together in his name upon earth. And then it is no wonder if their prayers be heard, seeing he himself is there ready to receive them, and present them to his father which is in heaven, who always hears him, and grants whatsoever he would have done in the world.

BUT that we may be sure to apprehend our Lord's meaning in these words aright, we must first consider who are here said to meet together in his name; and then, in what sense he saith, that he himself is in the midst of those who do so.

THE first may be soon dispatched; for it is plain from the constant use of the phrase in the holy scriptures, that we are then said to meet together in the name of Christ, when we meet for his honour and glory, according to his will, in obedience to his command, in the true faith of his holy name and word, with a sure trust and confidence on him alone, for direction and assistance in what we do, for God's acceptance of it, when it is done, and for his granting what we ask only for his sake; according to the many promises, which he himself hath made us,
that

that whatsoever we ask in his name, we shall receive, *John* xiv. 13, 14. *cap.* xvi. 23, 24, 26.

BUT in what sense our blessed Lord here saith, that where two or three are thus gathered together in his name, he himself is there in the midst of them, is a question not so easy to be resolved. Not that there is any difficulty in the words themselves, for they are as plain as words can be. And it is impossible that the truth contained in them should be more clearly delivered to us than it here is, which therefore we are bound, and have all the reason that can be to believe, and be fully perswaded of, altho' we are not able to understand, how it should be: as indeed we are not; no more than we are able to comprehend God's immensity or omnipresence, how he is in all places at all times, wholly; which being one of his infinite perfections, there is an impossibility in the thing itself, that our finite understandings should ever reach it. So it is in what our Lord here saith: he instanceth in two or three, which are the least of numbers; and so assures us, that where any number of christians, how many or how few soever they be, so that they be but a number or society met together in his name, he is there in the midst of them. He doth not only promise that he will be, but he affirms, that he is there. Neither doth he say, that his power, his grace, his blessing, his angels, or the like, is there, but that he himself is there; *There am I*, saith he, *in the midst of them*. He speaks also indefinitely of all such assemblies: wheresoever any meet together, in any place of the earth, and whensoever they do so, altho' there be thousands or millions of such congregations at one and the same time, and how remote soever they are from one another, yet, if they meet together in his name, he is with them all and every one alike.

How this should be, is a matter that deserves our serious enquiry. If we say, that he is in all such places as God, we say true: but that doth not come up to the point; unless he was God, he could not be in so many places at the same time: so that this may justly be reckon'd among the arguments which put his Godhead beyond dispute. But, as God, he is in all other places, as well as in such assemblies: whereas he here speaks of his being there in a more special and peculiar manner than he is elsewhere, *there*, saith he, *am I in the midst of them*; not only as one among them, but as the chief and principal person there, who presides over, assists, influenceth, and governs the whole assembly. Which we having his own word for, we cannot doubt in the least of it; and tho' we are not able to comprehend it, yet, notwithstanding, we are bound to believe it as much as if we could. But howsoever, that we may better apprehend what we ought to believe concerning it, and likewise what other grounds we have to do so, I shall, by his assistance, offer at some things which, by his blessing, may conduce something towards the clearer explication of his sense and meaning, in these words.

FOR this purpose, therefore, we must first lay down this, as a certain and undoubted truth, which we all agree in, as the foundation of our whole religion, that there is but *one living and true God*; that *the father, the word, and the Holy Ghost*, *ὁ πατήρ, ὁ υἱός, ὁ ἅγιος πνεῦμα*, *these three* (in the masculine gender) *are one*; (in the neuter) *one being*; or, as he himself expresseth it in *Hebrew*, *יהוה אחד* *one Jehovah, the Lord*, *Deut.* vi. 4. Wherefore, although the word, which was made flesh and dwelt among us, is said to subsist in the form or nature of God, before he took upon him the nature or form of man, and so is truly a distinct subsistence or person from the father and the Holy Ghost; yet we must still apprehend and believe him to be the one only living and true God; who, as he exerted his infinite wisdom, power and goodness in the creation of the world, so he manifested his infinite mercy and truth in the redemption of fallen man. The same God did both: the same God that made all things by the word of his power: the same God redeemed mankind with the price of his blood; and so is both our creator and our saviour. And it is in this latter sense, that he is generally to be understood in the holy scriptures, written for our admonition, and in order to our salvation; particularly in my text, where he saith, that he is in the midst of those who meet together in his name; that is, he is there, not only as God the creator, but as God our saviour. As he is the creator he is every where alike, ordering all things so as may tend most to the glory of his name: but as he is our saviour, he is more particularly in his church, ordering all things, so as may tend most to the salvation of mankind. And therefore, when any are met together in his name, and so for the carrying on of his design in accomplishing their salvation, he is in a peculiar manner present with them, as their

saviour,

saviour, to direct and assist them in it. He hath been thus present with his people in all ages, whensoever they met together in his name; according to the promise which he made immediately after the promulgation of the law upon mount Sinai: *In all places, saith he, where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee,* Exod. xx. 24. Where any are met together in his name, there his name is recorded, and thither he therefore promiseth to come. But how can he, who fills all places, come to any one? That he himself explains, by saying, *I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.* He will come thither as the saviour of the world, as the author and giver of all blessings to mankind, *in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed,* Gen. xx. 18. And so he will be there in another manner than he is elsewhere, by blessing what is there done, and those who do it. Now, what he there promiseth in my text, he asserts to be always verified, that where any are gathered together in his name, he is there in the midst of them. Which therefore must be understood in the same sense, even that he is there as God their saviour, to bless and sanctify what is there done, to their obtaining eternal salvation by him.

ACCORDING to the forefaid promise, we find in the old testament, that what place soever he appointed the people to meet in, whensoever they accordingly met there in his name, he was always there too: insomuch that the place he appointed for that purpose was called *אהל מועד* the tabernacle of the congregation, or meeting; not because the people there met together, but because God met with the people there: *There, saith he, I will meet with the children of Israel,* Exod. xxix. 42, 43. And that the people might know whereabouts he was in the said tabernacle, when they were there gather'd together, he acquainted Moses with the very place where he would always be, even in the space between the wings of the cherubims over the mercy-seat; and there, saith he, *I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in command unto the children of Israel,* Exod. xxv. 22. And accordingly we read, that when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubims, Numb. vii. 89. So that Moses was then an ear-witness of his being there. And indeed the whole congregation were often eye-witnesses of it; for he appeared in the cloud that was over the mercy-seat, Lev. xvi. 2. by some extraordinary bright lustre, and shining in it; so that the glory of the Lord appeared to all the children of Israel, Lev. ix. 23. Psal. lxxx. 1. They saw the sacrifice also consumed upon the altar by fire from the Lord, Lev. ix. 24. And the aforefaid cloud sometimes dilating itself, so as to cover the tabernacle, and fill it with the glory of the Lord, as it did when the tabernacle was first finished, Exod. xl. 34. and also when the ark was afterwards put into the temple that Solomon made for it, at the dedication thereof, 1 Kings viii. 10, 11. These were plain and sensible demonstrations of his divine presence; from whence the people could not but believe that he was really there, and sat between the cherubims, as he is often said to do, 1 Sam. iv. 4. 2 Kings xix. 15. 1 Chron. xiii. 6. Psal. lxxx. 1. Psal. xcix. 1. and so dwelt among his people, as he himself promised, Exod. xxv. 8. cap. xxix. 24. The word in the original is *שכן* which properly signifies to dwell in a place: from whence the tabernacle is called also *משכן* his dwelling place, Lev. xxvi. 11. And the Jews call his divine presence between the cherubims, *שכינה* the inhabitation or dwelling there, which they reckon one of the five things which were wanting in the second temple; but it was always in the first, which was built upon mount Zion, and that is the reason that God, our saviour is said to be set a king upon the holy hill of Zion, Psal. ii. 6. *To dwell in Zion,* Psal. ix. 11. Psal. lxxvi. 2. Isa. viii. 18, &c. *To bless and save his people out of Zion,* Psal. cxxviii. 5. Psal. cxxxiv. 3. Psal. xiv. 7. And out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined, Psal. l. 2. because he presentiated himself and manifested his power and glory to his people from between the cherubims above the mercy-seat in the temple, that was built upon that mount, therefore called the Holy Mountain, Psal. ii. 6. because the holy one of Israel was pleased in a wonderful and peculiar manner to dwell there.

By these things thus briefly hinted, we may understand, how God our saviour, in those days, was not only present in the place, where he appointed his people to meet together in his name, but often vouchsafed them outward signs and tokens of his being with them. It is true, we have no such signs and tokens now, neither do we need them, as that people did, for we have Christ's own word for it, which is more

more than all such visible signs that then were, or ever can be given of it; we have it from his own mouth, not that he is only in one place, as he was then, but that wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them. So that now we have a mercy-seat to go to, not only in one place, as they had, but in every place where we meet together in his name. Our Lord himself, the antitype of theirs, is now our mercy-seat; as the apostle assures us, saying, *that God hath set forth him to be ἱλαστήριον*, that is, not a propitiation, as we render it, but *the mercy-seat*, as the word signifies, *Rom. iii. 25.* but we can go to this mercy-seat, or, as the apostle elsewhere calls it, the *throne of grace*, *Heb. iv. 15.* wheresoever we are: for it is but meeting together in his name, and we may and ought to be as certain, that he is with us, as if we heard him speaking, or saw him sitting and shining forth in his glory, over the mercy-seat, as he did in the old law. For we have a more sure word of prophecy for it, Christ himself hath said it; and so hath given us as great assurance as can be of it; and therefore we ought as firmly to believe it, and be as fully persuaded of it, as we can be of any thing in the whole world.

THIS is that which the gospel all along most strictly requires of us, above all things else, even that we believe what is there written, especially what Christ himself hath said, so as not to doubt, in the least, but that what he hath said, is just as he said it is; and what he hath promised or foretold shall accordingly come to pass, just as he foretold or promised it should, although we have no other reason in the world for it, but his word, which is infinitely more than all other reasons put together: for, as he himself said, *heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away*, *Matt. xxiv. 35.* and therefore he having said, *where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, we must not doubt at all, but stedfastly believe, that whensoever we meet together in his name, he is really there, as that we our selves are so, although we do not see him there; nor can expect it, now his body is gone to heaven.

It is true, after he was risen from the dead, continuing some days in his body upon earth, before he ascended up to heaven, he was several times pleased to appear visible to his apostles, when met together in his name; as the same day he rose, at evening, the door being shut, where they were assembled, it is said, *Jesus came and stood in the midst of them*, *John xx. 19.* then they all saw him, except *Thomas*, who was not there. And again, eight days after, when they were met together again, and *St. Thomas* was with them, Jesus was pleased to shew himself in the midst of them again, *ver. 26.* in both places it is said he stood in the midst, according to what he saith in my text, *there am I in the midst of them.* And it is also observable, that at his second time of appearing visibly to them, he bad *St. Thomas* thrust his finger into his side, without which *St. Thomas* had said, that he would not believe that he was risen from the dead, *ver. 25.* which plainly shews, that at the assembly, when the disciples told *St. Thomas*, that they had seen the Lord, Jesus was there also in the midst of them, and heard what *St. Thomas* said, altho' they did not then see him.

BUT tho' our blessed Lord thus shewed himself sometimes before his ascension, to his disciples, when met together, in his very body, that so they might be eye-witnesses that he was risen from the dead; yet now that he is sat down, in that, at the right hand of God, in heaven, we must not think that his body also is present in any of the assemblies of his saints on earth, much less in all: for then it must be in many places at the same time; which is contrary to the nature of a body; and therefore cannot be supposed of his, at least, as to the substance of it. Which I therefore add, because I dare not deny, but his glorious body in heaven may have great influence upon those of the same nature with it upon earth. For we know, that all bodies have a certain sphere of activity about them, some less, some greater, some so great, that we are not able to conceive how far it reacheth: as for example, the sun, which, according to astronomers, is near a million of miles off, and yet we see what mighty influence and power it hath upon the earth, and all the bodies that are upon it, or in it. And yet this too seems but a small part of its virtue or sphere. But our saviour's body, by reason of its union to the divine person, must needs be far more glorious than the sun, as glorious, as it is possible for matter to be made. And therefore how far its influences reach, or how the emanations which proceed from it may affect bodies of its own nature upon earth, especially

such as by faith are united to him, and meet together in his name, we know not: neither is it necessary that we should, having no divine revelation of it. But this we know, that the same person whose most glorious body is in heaven, is always in the midst of those who meet together in his name upon earth; for this he himself hath revealed to us. He doth not say, that his body is there, but he saith, that he himself, whose body it is, is there. *There am I, saith he, in the midst of them.*

NEITHER is it necessary, that his body should be there: it is sufficient that his spirit is with them. St. Paul could tell the *Corinthians* and *Colossians*, that he was *absent from them in the body, but present in spirit*, 1 Cor. v. 3. Col. ii. 5. and the prophet *Elisha* could say to his servant *Gebazi*, *Went not my heart with thee?* when his body was a great way off, 2 Kings v. 26. how much more, where the spirit of Christ is, there is Christ, altho' his body be not there; for the spirit of Christ, is Christ himself, the same God with himself. And therefore, when he promised his apostles that he would send them his holy spirit as another comforter, he said, *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you*, John xiv. 18. he would come to them by his spirit. So he doth where any are gathered together in his name. He comes to them, and is in the midst of them by his holy spirit, as he is the spirit of God our saviour, working in them both to will and to do, helping their infirmities, guiding, and quickening, and strengthening, and assisting them in what they do, that it may be acceptable to God, and profitable to themselves: so that, as St. Paul saith, *they can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth them*, Phil. iv. 13.

THAT the apostles looked upon Christ as thus present with them when they met together in his name, appears from that solemn assembly they held in his name soon after his ascension, for the filling up the place that was void in their college, by the treachery and death of *Judas Iscariot*: for our Lord himself having chosen all the rest, they would not undertake to chuse any one, but addressed themselves to him as present with them, that he would be pleased to direct them to the person whom he had chosen for that place; saying to him, *thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen*, Acts i. 24, and when, upon their casting of lots, the lot was fallen upon *Matthias*, they made no doubt but he was the person whom Christ had chosen, and therefore admitted him immediately into their number: which plainly shews, that they believ'd that *Christ* was in the midst of them, and had not only heard what they had said, but had also granted the request they had made to him.

AND so certainly we ought always to do: whensoever we meet together in his name, we ought stedfastly to believe, as the apostles did, that our Lord Christ, according to his word, is there in the midst of us. We ought to believe it with that true christian faith, *which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. Tho' we see not our Lord there, we are sure he is so, because he himself hath said it. And therefore we must accordingly offer up our prayers and praises unto him, and to the father only in his name, as there present with us. And so we do in that excellent liturgy which our church hath composed, to be used in all our christian assemblies. We all along address ourselves to God, as he is our saviour, and there in the midst of us. And that we may the better do it, we, at the beginning, call upon one another, saying, *O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoyce in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and shew ourselves glad in him with psalms.* Whereby we are put in mind, that we are now in the presence of God our saviour, or, as it is here expressed, the God or strength of our salvation; and should therefore worship him, and rejoyce in him, and praise him, and magnifie his most holy name, for the wonderful works that he hath done for us. Which we accordingly do in the psalms, and hymns, and creeds: especially in the *Te deum*, we celebrate his great glory and goodness to us, saying to him, as there present, *Thou art the king of glory, O Christ, thou art the everlasting son of the father: when thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb, &c.* We often also call upon Christ to have mercy on us: and in the litany, after the beginning, we all along direct our prayers to him, who hath redeemed us with his own most precious blood, beseeching him, our good Lord, to deliver us from all evil, and to hear the prayers we put up unto him; and then crying out

out to him, *O thou lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace, and have mercy on us. O Christ hear us. O son of David have mercy upon us. Graciously hear us, O Christ, graciously hear us, O Lord Christ;* still calling upon him as there present with us, and ready to hear and help us.

SEVERAL also of the collects are directed immediately unto Christ, (as first Sunday in *Lent*, third in *Advent*, *St. Stephen's*, &c.) and all the other to God only in his name. For they all conclude with these or the like words, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Which is the same in effect with praying to him: for as he is a distinct person in the godhead, the only begotten of the father, and as such redeemed us with his blood, and is now interceding for us, we pray in his name, and for his sake. But as he is God also, of the same divine essence with the father, whensoever we pray to God, we pray to him as well as to the father and the Holy Ghost. So that when we pray to God, in the name of Christ our saviour, we pray to Christ himself, as he is God our saviour: and when we offer up our prayers to the father in the name of his son, as well as to the father, though not as they are two distinct persons, yet as they are one and the same almighty and eternal God; who having been pleased to enter into covenant with us, and to promise to be our God, and our father in his son Jesus: in him, and as members of his body, we also call him, *our father*, and pray unto him under that notion, saying, as our Lord himself hath taught us, *Our father, which art in heaven*: which is the same also in effect with praying in the name of Christ; forasmuch as it is only in him that God is our father, and we can truly call him so. So that through the whole course of our publick devotions, we do all in the name of Christ our saviour, who is always with him, and in him our father in heaven; and likewise with us when met together in his name upon earth.

ESPECIALLY at the sacrament of his last supper, which he was pleased to ordain and institute in such a wonderful and mysterious manner, that we may there look upon him, as present with us, not only by his spirit, but, as it were, in his body too: for he calls the sacramental bread and wine his body and his blood: *This is my body, which is given for you, and this is my blood, which is shed for you*: not as if they were so in their own nature; for the substance both of the bread and wine is still the same as it was before; but he expresseth it so, that we may the better apprehend, and believe him to be as really there in the midst of us, as if we saw his very body and blood before us; and may, by faith, partake of all the merits of his death, as effectually to all intents and purposes, as if we eat his very body, and drank that blood which he shed for us, and so had it always running in our veins, to purge and cleanse us from all sin. Which is certainly the highest expression, and the best course that could be found out, whereby to possess our minds with a due sense of his most intimate presence with us, when we meet together in his name, as we always do, when we are at his own table: and therefore when we receive his most blessed body and blood, we join together in saying or singing that ancient apostolical hymn, *glory be to God on high*: where we speak to him as there present with us, saying, *O Lord, the only begotten son, Jesus Christ: O Lord God, lamb of God, son of the father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us, &c.* concluding with this solemn address of praise and thankfulness to him, *for thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the father*. After which we are dismissed with his blessing, according to his promise before-mentioned, *in all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee*. For he having instituted this sacrament on purpose, in remembrance of himself, saying, *do this in remembrance of me*, wheresoever this is celebrated, his name must needs be there recorded; and therefore we cannot doubt but he is always there, ready to bestow his blessing upon all those who there meet together in his name, to receive it: the greatest of all his blessings, forasmuch as his name is recorded there in the highest manner that can be upon earth. But in all places, where any meet together in his name, his name being there also so far recorded, he comes thither, to distribute his blessings among them, such as every one stands in need of. We may be sure of it, for he himself asserts it, saying, *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*.

THIS

THIS, I know, is a truth that is seldom thought of; and therefore I thought good to put you in mind of it, because of the great use that may be made of it, by all that seriously mind their future state, and desire in good earnest to be saved: for such (and I speak only to such) may see by this, where to meet with their saviour when they please. It is but coming to church, and there meeting together in his name, and you have his word for it, that he will be there in the midst of you. And who would not meet their saviour, the best friend they have in the world, as often as they can? what need is there of any other arguments to persuade sincere christians to frequent our publick devotions? they who do not, have just cause to suspect their sincerity, and to fear that, whatsoever they pretend, they would joyfully embrace all opportunities they can get of meeting with him to receive his blessing.

BUT, for that purpose, ye must not come only to see or be seen, nor out of custom, only, and by the by, but you must meet together in his name, in obedience to his will, with a desire to serve and worship him there, and with a firm belief of whatsoever he hath said, and particularly this, that he is there in the midst of you; for unless you believe it, it is all one to you whether he be there or no, and therefore you can expect no blessing from him, but rather a curse, for not doing him so much right, as to believe his word.

BUT do ye indeed believe, as ye ought, that Christ is there in the midst of you? how humbly then, how modestly, how gravely, how reverently should you carry your selves before him? after the same manner as if he should appear visibly among you. Which you cannot chuse but do, if you do but remember and consider all the while you are there, in whose presence you are, and what you are doing. In repeating the psalms and hymns, you speak to almighty God your saviour, acknowledging his infinite goodness and love to you, and therefore must not sit down, but stand in a posture of adoration before him, as the greatest person in the world. In the collects and litany, you pray to him, or to the father in his name, for pardon, and all things necessary for life and godliness; and therefore must do it only upon our knees. All the while you are there met together in his name, you are serving him, your great lord and master, and therefore must do it *with reverence and godly fear*, Heb. xii. 28.

AND whatsoever ye there do, as ye must do it in the name of Christ, so ye must trust on him for God's acceptance of it; and likewise for his granting of what you ask in his name; according to the promise which he hath here made us: for, in the verse before my text, he saith, *if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven.* And then he adds this as the reason of it, *for, saith he, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*; because he is there ready to receive and present their petitions to the father, therefore they shall be granted. So that we have his word and promise for it; which we ought to trust on. And that we may the better do it in our daily prayers, our church concludes them always with that of St. Chrysostom, still extant in his liturgy, *Almighty God, who hast given us grace, at this time, to make our common supplications unto thee, and dost promise, that when two or three are gathered together in thy name, thou wilt grant their requests.* It is here that he makes this promise, which we must constantly believe, as ever we desire it should be fulfilled to us.

Lastly, WHEN ye have met in the name of Christ, and so with Christ himself, ye must be sure, afterwards, to live accordingly. The Jews observing the carriage of the apostles, *took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus*, Acts iv. 13. so whatsoever place or company you are in, ye should carry yourselves so, that they may take notice that ye have been with Jesus, that ye have not gone to church in vain, but have indeed met your saviour there, and have receiv'd so much grace and virtue from him, that ye are grown better than ye were, and better than other people are: and that by your often meeting with Christ on earth, ye are fitted to live with him for ever in heaven.

S E R M O N CXXII.

The way of seeking God, so as to find him.

I S A I. IV. 6.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.

ALTHOUGH there be many among us who have much, there are none but want something, something which they think would make them happy, or, at least, happier than they are, if they had it. Hence it is, that people generally are so very busy in the world, some seeking for one thing, some for another, according to their several inclinations and conditions: but whatsoever it is that men seek for here below, when they have found it, they are but where they were; no more satisfied than they were before, but rather less: for the things of this world are so far from lessening our desires, when we have them, that they rather heighten and increase them. The more we have, the more we crave; the more we find, the more we seek: so that if men's hearts be once set upon such things, there is no end of seeking; as many have found by woful experience, who have spent their whole lives in seeking, and seeking of them, without ever finding any rest or quiet in their minds.

AND that which is worst of all is, that men are, notwithstanding, so earnest in seeking after other things, that they seldom or never think of him, who can satiate their souls, and make them happy; and therefore ought not only to be sought before and above all things else, but all other things ought to be sought for, only in order to our finding him. Which, that I might be so happy as to convince you of, and likewise direct you how to seek, so as to find this the chiefest, the only good in the world, I have chosen these words to explain unto you, where you have first a command, *seek ye the Lord*; and then the time or season wherein to do it, *while he may be found*.

THE command is general, imposed not only upon the *Jews*, as some have thought, nor upon the *Gentiles* only, as others; but upon all mankind. And though nothing be more frequently mention'd in God's holy word, yet, I fear, there are but few who understand how to do it. I am sure there are but few that do it as they ought. And therefore nothing can be more necessary, than to shew what it is properly to seek the Lord, and how ye may do it, so as not to seek in vain, but may certainly find him, and, in him, all the joy and happiness that ye can desire.

WHEN we are therefore commanded to *seek the Lord*, it is not to be so understood, as if he was at any distance from us, or in some secret place, where it would be difficult to find him. This the apostle forewarns us of, where he saith, that God *hath made of one blood all nations, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him*; and then adds, *though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live and move and have our being*, Acts xvii. 27, 28. for seeing we have our very being in him, we cannot be where he is not, and therefore need not go from our-

selves to find him; he being always present with us, and we in him, wherefore ever we are.

BUT by seeking the Lord, we are to understand, our seeking his love and favour; that he may be in a peculiar manner our God, to bless us and keep us in all our ways, which is therefore elsewhere expressed by their seeking the face of the Lord; as, *seek ye the Lord, and his strength, seek his face for evermore*, Psal. cv. 4. and he himself saith, *I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face, in their Affliction they will seek me early*, Hos. v. 15. where seeking him, and seeking his face, is plainly the same thing. And the seeking his face, is the same also with seeking his favour. As where the wise man saith, *many seek the rulers favour*, Prov. xxix 26. in the original it is, *many seek the rulers face*. So we are said to seek the face of God, the supreme ruler of the world, when we seek to find favour in his sight: that he may cause his face to shine upon us, and be gracious and merciful unto us. This is to seek the Lord to good purpose: happy are they who can so find him: *blessed are the people who are in such a case: blessed are they who thus have the Lord for their God*.

BUT to what purpose is it for us sinful creatures thus to seek the Lord? for how can we, who have so highly offended him, expect to find any favour or mercy at his hands? the unfolding of this mystery, will make way for our right understanding what is properly to seek the Lord, and how we may do it effectually. And therefore I shall search into the bottom of it, and lay it as open as I can, that all who do not wilfully shut their eyes, may see into it.

FOR which purpose, therefore, we must first call to mind, how that God having made man in his own image and likeness, so long as he continued such as he was made, he that made him could not but be well-pleased and delighted in him, not only in that he was the workmanship of his own hands, but likewise in that he was like unto himself, so far as a creature could be, in *righteousness and true holiness*. So that if we had kept our first estate, we should never have had any occasion to seek God, for we should always have had him, and enjoyed him to the full, as far as finite creatures could be capable of his infinite goodness and favour.

BUT the first man *Adam*, in whom all others were contained, by transgressing the commandment, defaced the image of God that was enstamped upon him, and so made himself and his whole posterity unlike to God, of a nature quite different and contrary to his. For his is most pure and holy, whereas all mankind is now become sinful and unclean: *There is none that doth good, no not one*; but all are naturally inclined to transgress the laws of God, and do it continually. Hence it is, that he is so highly offended and displeased with all mankind, not only for their not answering his end in making them, but likewise for that both they themselves and all their actions are so disagreeable to his holy will and nature. And therefore, as the apostle observes, *we are all by nature the children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. that is, so long as we continue in our natural state, such as we came into the world, as propagated from the first *Adam*, we are under the displeasure and wrath of God, and liable to the dismal effects and consequents of it, even to all sorts of punishments which it is possible for creatures to bear, and which were at first threatned under the name of death.

THIS is the true state of nature, which all mankind are in: but seeing they fell into it at first only in their common head or stock, the first *Adam*, almighty God, to shew forth his mercy and truth, which otherwise would not have appeared in the world, was graciously pleased to find out a way for their recovery out of it, if they will but make use of it. Such a way, that the angels themselves cannot but desire to look into, and admire; tho' men, who are most concerned, are apt to take little notice of it, or at least not so much as it is their own interest to do. And in short, it was this: that eternal and most glorious being, here called *Jehovah, the Lord*, having from all eternity begotten a son of one essence or substance with himself, as he exerted his infinite wisdom, power and goodness, creating all things by him, so he manifested also his infinite grace and truth in redeeming fallen man, by him; who for that purpose, by the power of his holy spirit overshadowing a virgin, took upon him the whole nature of man, uniting it to himself in so wonderful a manner, that he became truly man, as well as God, in one and the same person: man in general having the whole nature of man in him, as the first man *Adam* had; with this mighty difference,

difference, that the first man, was only man, this God as well as man, and so fully qualified to restore mankind to the same state from which they fell in the first. And therefore was called *Jesus the saviour*, as being the only saviour of mankind, and *able to save to the utmost all that come to God by him*, as all were destroyed by falling from God in the first man.

FOR the eternal son of God being thus become man in general, another *Adam*, as he is called, he lived some time upon earth, fulfilling all righteousness, and performing most perfect obedience to the will and law of God, which the first, and all other men had transgressed: neither was the righteousness which he perform'd in our nature, only perfect, and therefore as much, but much more than was required of mankind, in that it was the righteousness not of man only, but likewise of God himself. Which he demonstrated by doing many such good works as exceeded the power of man, and therefore could not have been done by him, but as he was God: and so were all his works, the works of God as well as man: and so was his doctrine also, whereby he taught men what they should believe and do, that they may be saved by him. Every thing he said was an oracle, uttered by God himself.

NEITHER was he obedient only through the whole course of his life, but to death itself, even the death of the cross. Upon which he, the last *Adam*, suffered, that death which had been threatned to the first. And he having suffered it in our whole nature, it was not only equivalent to the death of all men, but it was of infinitely greater worth and value; in that it was the death of a divine person, one who was God as well as man. So that by it, he did not only make full satisfaction for the sins of mankind, and so appeased the wrath which God had justly conceived against them; but he merited also his favour, and all sorts of blessings for them, even all things necessary to make them holy and happy for ever; which therefore are all promised in him, and for his sake, in God's holy word. And when he had thus, by the sacrifice of his death, made propitiation for the sins of the whole world, he soon after rose from the dead, and went up to heaven, where he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God the father, hath absolute dominion over all the creatures in heaven and earth, and ever liveth to make intercession for those who come unto God by him.

NOW, from hence we may see what sure ground we have to expect the favour of God, if we seek it aright: for though we have lost it, his only begotten son hath redeemed it for us; and is always ready to restore us to it, if we do but apply ourselves unto him for it. It is true, we never did, nor can see him upon earth, if we could, he could not do so much for us as he can now that he is in heaven, there appearing in the presence of God for us; making atonement and reconciliation for our sins, by virtue of the sacrifice which he once offered upon earth for them. What therefore if we have sinned? we have all sinned, but Jesus Christ hath suffered for our sins? What if we have incensed the wrath of God against us? his only son hath delivered us from it. What if we have deserved death? the Lord of life died in our stead. What if we can merit nothing at the hands of God? he himself hath merited all things for us. What if we have defaced the image of God, in which we were made? he that is the express image of his person can enstamp it again upon us. What if we have no righteousness that can bear the test of God in themselves? in him we have the righteousness of God himself. What if we can do nothing of ourselves? we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us. What if we have got a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet us? his grace is sufficient for us, his strength is made perfect in weakness. What if we live in the midst of temptations and dangers? he is always with us, ready either to prevent our falling, or else to raise us up again, which he sees best for us. What if we be in such streights, that we know not which way to turn us? his holy spirit is a voice behind us, saying, *This is the way, walk in it*. What if the devil should desire to have us, that he may sift us as wheat? our mediator will pray that our faith may not fail, and then the gates of hell can never prevail against us. What if our good works come short of what the law requires, and therefore in themselves are offensive unto God? yet being done in his name, they are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, the Lord our righteousness. What if, after all our care and diligence to avoid it, we sometimes fall into sin, and so displease God? *We have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world,*

world. He not only was, when he died for them, but by virtue of that death, he now and always is the propitiation for our sins, reconciling us unto God, and keeping us in his love and favour.

SEEING therefore we have such an high-priest in heaven, making atonement for our sins, such a mediator between God and us, such an advocate with the father, such a glorious, almighty, all-sufficient saviour, that is *able to save to the utmost* those who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us, we may well go to God by him, and seek his favour. By him, I say, and not only I, but the apostle himself, *Heb. vii. 25.* For there is no way for us, sinful creatures upon earth, to go up to the most high and holy king of heaven, but by the mediator which he hath appointed between us: who therefore saith, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the father, but by me,* John xiv. 6. but by him we may all go unto the father, seek his face, and find grace and favour in his sight; for *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,* John i. 17. It was he that purchased the grace or favour of God for us: it is in him that God hath promised it to us, and manifesteth his truth in doing what he hath so promised; and therefore, by him, we may all find it, if we seek as we ought by him.

AND herein lies the great art of seeking the Lord, so as to find him gracious and merciful unto us: we must seek him in the name and through the mediation of his only begotten son, our only saviour Jesus Christ, believing and trusting on him, (who alone can do it) to make our peace with God, and reconcile him to us, that he may be our God, and we his people, according to the covenant that he hath made and confirmed to us in him. This is the way which God himself directs us to, wherein to seek him, by his prophet, in this very place; for he here first calls upon all that thirst to come unto him; and for their encouragement, tells them, that he will *make an everlasting covenant with them, even the sure mercies of David,* ver. 1, 2, 3. the mercies which he had promised, and so made sure in Christ, the son of David, whom he had given as a witness, a leader, and a commander of his people, ver. 4. as a witness to testify his mercy and truth to them, as a leader to bring them to him, and as a commander to rule and govern them. And then, having asserted the largeness of his dominion, he adds, *seek ye the Lord while he may be found.* Seek him in the way described, by him in whom the covenant of grace is established, and who alone can lead you to him; and therefore by whom alone you can ever find him.

BUT as we can never seek the Lord, so as to find him any other way than by Christ, so we can never do it by him, without believing in him. Upon which the gospel therefore lays the whole stress of our salvation, and of all things relating to it; which are all, in effect, comprehended in our seeking the Lord: for if we seek him, so as to find him, all things else follow in course. And therefore all that would do it effectually, must live with a constant and firm belief in Christ our saviour, depending wholly upon him to make reconciliation and intercession for them, that almighty God, for his sake, will be graciously pleased to pardon all their sins, to renew and sanctify them by his holy spirit, to receive them again into his favour, and into the number of his own children, that they may live, for the future, always under his particular care and conduct. They who thus seek the Lord, can never fail of finding him.

BUT, in order to our thus seeking the Lord, there are several things requir'd as preliminaries to prepare and dispose us for it: whereof the first is, that our hearts be possessed with such a belief and sense of God's glory and goodness, that we really prefer him in our judgments, and desire him with our whole hearts, before all things else; so as to be able truly to say with David, *whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,* Psal. lxxiii. 25. for they who seek the Lord, must seek him as he is the Lord, *Jehovah,* the greatest good in the world; and therefore must seek him with all their hearts, or above all things in the world besides, otherwise they cannot expect to find him, for they do not seek him as he is: *If thou seek the Lord thy God, saith Moses, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,* Deut. iv. 29. and he himself says, *ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart,* Jer. xxix. 13. but none can seek the Lord with all their hearts, that do not so desire him. And none can desire the Lord with all their hearts, but they will seek him so in course, *with my soul,* saith the prophet

prophet to God, *have I desired thee in the night: yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early*, Isa. xxvi. 9.

BUT no man can desire the Lord with all his heart, whose heart is still set upon sin or wickedness; for that being directly contrary unto him, it is impossible they should both be heartily desired at the same time. And therefore, in order to your desiring and seeking the Lord so as to find him, ye must take that course which the prophet here prescribes for it; who, when he had said, *seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near*, adds immediately, *let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*, ver. 7. whereby we are given to understand, that they who do not forsake their sins, and turn unto the Lord, shall find no mercy at his hands, but they shall find it abundantly that do.

WHEN your hearts are thus taken off from sin, and your desires wholly carried after the Lord, then ye must seek him by prayer, according to the prophet's direction in my text, *seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*. Intimating, that we must seek him, by calling upon him, or praying to him. To the same purpose is that in the prophet Zechariah, *many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord*, Zech. viii. 22. for tho' many may seem to pray unto the Lord, and yet not seek him, none can really seek him without praying to him, nor with it neither, unless they pray aright, that is, in the name of the Lord Jesus, our mediator and advocate with him. For as we can never find any favour in the sight of God without him, so we have no ground to expect it by him, unless we ask it in his name; but if we ask it in his name, we shall certainly have it; for we have his own word for it, saying, *verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. whatsoever we may think upon earth, the name of Jesus is very powerful in heaven; so powerful that nothing is ever denied that is good for us, if we heartily use his name in praying for it; no, not the greatest thing that we can ever desire and seek, even the Lord God almighty himself, or his love and favour.

BUT then we must take care to use his name aright, even so as to believe, at the same time, that he will make his word good, and intercede so effectually for us, that we shall certainly have what we desire in it. This caution he himself hath also given us, when he saith, *therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark xi. 24. and therefore commands us, by his apostles, to pray in faith, *nothing wavering*, James i. 6. and *without wrath and doubting*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. for if we will not do him so much right as to take his word, and believe that he will do as he hath said and promised, in the place abovementioned, we deprive ourselves of the benefit of his intercession; for he intercedes for none but those who actually believe and trust in him. And unless he mediate or intercede for us, we may pray our hearts out, all will signify nothing, God will neither grant what we desire, nor accept of any thing we do. Whereas if we diligently seek the Lord God almighty, by prayer and supplication, in the name of his son Jesus, and keep our faith all the while fixed upon him, as our advocate, and upon the promises which are made us in him, we shall not fail of finding him, in the sincere and constant use of the means, which he hath appointed for that purpose.

I SAY, in the use of the means, which he hath appointed for that purpose for we must not expect that he should work miracles for us, or act immediately from himself, without our using such means as he hath ordained for such an end; for he would not have ordained them, if he had not designed to act by them. Now those which we call the means of grace, because it is in them that God usually manifesteth his grace and favour to us, are the publick praying to, and praising his great name, the solemn hearing his holy word read or expounded to us, and celebrating the sacrament of our Lord's supper, in memory of his death, by virtue of which he intercedes in heaven for us: and all this in places dedicated to the name and service of almighty God, where he himself promised, in the old-testament, to meet his people; *In all places*, saith he, *where I recorded my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee*, Exod. xx. 24. and in the new, our Lord himself saith, *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. and if he be there, as he most certainly

is, wheresoever any number of his faithful people are met together in his name, they may as certainly find him there, ready to perfume their spiritual sacrifices with the incense of his merits, that God may smell a sweet favour from them, and manifest his special love and favour to such as heartily and sincerely offer them up unto him.

I ADD, heartily and sincerely, because without that they are not spiritual sacrifices, but dead and useless performances, neither acceptable to God, nor any way profitable to those who perform them. We go thither to meet the Lord, the greatest person in the world, and to seek his favour, and therefore must prepare our hearts, and put them into the best posture that we can, that we may not only carry our selves before him, and serve him with all outward expressions of humility and reverence due to his divine majesty, but may likewise keep our minds all the while intent upon him, and upon the service we are performing to him; that the petitions we put up unto him, in the name of his son there present, may come from the bottom of our hearts; and our whole souls may be lifted up in praising his holy name; that we may receive his word with all readiness of mind, and sincere resolutions to believe and live according to it; and feed upon our Lord's most blessed body and blood, with such a quick and lively faith, that he may ever after dwell in us and we in him. If we could thus heartily and sincerely use the means which he hath appointed for our obtaining his grace and favour, we could not miss of it.

BUT that we may use them thus, we must use them constantly: it is no easy matter to bring our hearts into such a frame as this; and it can never be done without long and constant exercise. Use makes perfectness in this as well as in other things; they who do not use all these means, can use none of them to any purpose; and they who seldom use them, can never use them as they ought. What will it avail you to come to church, to seek the Lord a little now and then, upon some extraordinary occasion, or when ye have nothing else to do? Is this to seek the Lord, so as to find him? no, deceive not yourselves, this is no seeking him at all; for that none can be truly said to do, that do not seek him before all things in the world besides: whereas it is plain, that you seek other things not only besides him, but before him too. And then it is no wonder that ye never find him gracious and merciful to you, but rather angry and displeased with you, for preferring other things before him, and for not seeking him while he may be found.

WHILE he may be found. That is the next thing to be considered in these words, wherein ye are commanded to seek the Lord, while he may be found; and so are put in mind, that there is a time when he may be found, and a time when he will not. That there is a time when he may be found, we cannot doubt, seeing he hath commanded us to seek him. For he said *not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain*, Isa. xlv. 19. but that there is a time also, when he will not be found is too plain to be denied; for he himself hath said it, he said to his people *Israel, they shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, but they shall not find him, he hath withdrawn himself from them*, Hos. v. 6. and therefore he ordered one of the prophets children to be called *Lorubamah*, that is, one that should not find mercy; and gave this as the reason, *for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly cast them away*, Hos. i. 6. And another he called *Lo-ammi*, that is, not my people, for, *faith he, ye are not my people, and I will not be your God*, ver. 9. Tho' he had been their God for so long a time, yet the time would come, when they should not find him any longer so. And when the time drew near that this prophecy was to be accomplished, our Lord, coming near *Jerusalem* and beholding it, wept over it, saying, *if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes*, Luk. xix. 42. the time was when she might have seen them if she would; but she would not then. And now that time is gone, such things are hid from her eyes; so that altho' she seek them, she shall not find them. And therefore he tells the inhabitants of that city, and country, that *the kingdom of God shall be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*, Matt. xxi. 43. whereby he also intimated the reason of this severe threatening, even because they had not lived according to the means of grace, which they had so long enjoyed; therefore they should enjoy them no longer, but other people should now have them, which would make better use of them than they had done.

How

How punctually this was fulfilled upon the *Jews* we all know; they were once the people of God, and found him to be their God, whensoever they duly sought him: but now he hath cast them off, for their obstinacy and unbelief, for above these 1600 years. And though they have been seeking him all this while, they could never find him.

NEITHER is this the case of the *Jews* only, but of many nations also which have professed the christian religion: *Judea* itself, upon which the sun of righteousness first arose, is now returned to darkness; the seven churches of *Asia* are now but so many dens of thieves and robbers; all *Asia Minor*, and *Syria*, and *Egypt*, together with *Greece*, *Macedonia*, and other parts of *Europe*, where the apostles first propagated christianity, are now over-run with *Mahometanism*. That part of *Africa* which we call *Barbary*, that was once so famous for learning and piety, is now as infamous for ignorance and barbarity, there is scarce a christian to be found among them; at least that is a native of the country. And it is much to be observed, that christianity flourished among them so long as they continued in the unity of the church, but vanish'd soon after they fell into schisms and factions. A sad omen for us.

AND to come nearer home: it is now near 203 years since the reformation began in *Germany*: and so long as they who professed it, liv'd up to what they professed, it spread and increased wonderfully: but now we see how it is persecuted, and in effect suppressed, not only in a neighbour-kingdom, but in several parts of the empire. And among ourselves: it is now above 140 years since our church was reformed; and reformed in doctrine, discipline and worship, according to the pattern of the primitive and apostolick church, as near as a national church could well be. And so long as both clergy and people continued stedfastly to believe her doctrine, submit to her discipline, and worship God with one heart and mind, according to her directions; as they sought him constantly, he was as constantly found of them, and defended both them and his church established among them, against their enemies on every side.

BUT how is the case now altered with us? how basely have we left our first love? how far are we fallen from the zeal and piety of our first reformers, and their immediate successors? which part of our reformation is now observed, as it once was, and always ought to be? which of the articles of our holy religion have not been questioned by some, and denied by others, and openly contradicted? what sort of tares did the enemy ever sow in our Lord's field, that have not sprung up again among us? how many false-teachers are now to be found among us, who, according to St. Peter's prediction, *privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves (and others too) swift destruction*, 2 Pet. ii. 1. how little respect is now shewn to the ministry, or to the discipline that Christ hath settled in his church? or rather, how is it generally slighted and despised, as if it was an useless insignificant thing? how many are there, who live as without God in the world, performing no sort of worship to him? how few that worship him according to the orders of our church, with reverence and godly fear? how many are there among us that were never baptized, and so are mere heathens? how many of those who are baptized, never receive the sacrament of our Lord's supper all their lives long? how few that receive it above once or twice a year, even in such places also where it is celebrated every Lord's-day? what wonder is it then, that schism and divisions, ignorance, profaneness, immorality, and all sorts of lewdness and debauchery, have overspread the face of the whole kingdom? how can it be otherwise, when the means which God hath appointed to make them better, are so generally neglected by people of all ranks and qualities in it?

BUT is this the way to enjoy the benefit of our reformation any longer? or rather, is it not the ready way to lose it? God grant, that may not be the consequent, the sad consequent of our making so little use of it. I am sure we have too much cause to fear it; for the spirit of God will not always strive with men.

No nation under heaven hath had the means of seeking the Lord, and his grace, more duly and powerfully administred, than this for a long time hath had, and of his infinite goodness as yet hath; but if we, notwithstanding, still refuse to seek him by them, but disregard and abuse them, so as to be no way the better, but rather the worse for them, what can we expect, but that he should take them from us, and give them to a nation that will bring forth the fruits thereof?

which

which God knows we have not, and therefore may justly deprive us of them, and punish us too for the contempt that we have thrown upon them. Let us hear what he himself saith, *because I called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me*, Prov. i. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

WHEREFORE, brethren, it is now time, high time, to look about you, and to seek the Lord while he may be found; you do not know how soon he may hide his face, and then it will be in vain to seek him. And therefore be advised to do it now; for he saith, *I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee. Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. To day, therefore, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, but set yourselves in good earnest to seek the Lord, *before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord come unto you. Seek ye the Lord all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgments, seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger*, as the prophet speaks, Zeph. ii. 2, 3.

SEEK ye the Lord, therefore, while ye may; seek him with all your hearts, above all things in the world besides; for if ye seek him, ye seek all the good things ye can desire, and shall have them too: *The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing*, Psal. xxxiv. 10. 2 Chron. xiv. 7.

IF ye seek him, ye seek his mercy to pardon all your sins, his wisdom to direct you in all your ways, his power to defend you from all your enemies, his holy spirit to support you in all conditions: ye seek righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: ye seek the truest riches, the highest honours, the greatest pleasures that men or angels can ever have: these are glorious things, indeed, for a man to seek. Who would not seek them if he might? and who may not find them if he will? blessed be God, he may yet be found, if we do but seek him as we ought.

LET us therefore, by his assistance, now resolve to do so. Let others, if they please, seek the little things upon earth, let us seek the Lord, the greatest, the only good in all the world. Let us seek him this, and all the rest of our days. This is not a work to be done only now and then, but through the whole course of our lives. It is said of Uzziab King of Judah, as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper, 2 Kings xxvi. 5. and as long as we heartily seek him, we shall as certainly find him. We shall find God the father, our health, and strength, and tower; our sun and shield, and our exceeding great reward. We shall find God the son, our wisdom and righteousness, our sanctification and redemption. We shall find God the Holy Ghost, our light, and life, and joy; our guide and direction what to do, and our assistance in the doing of it. We shall find this one almighty being, the Lord of heaven and earth, our constant friend, our father and our God; we shall find that he will make his abode with us, cause his face to shine upon us, and so manifest his special love and favour to us: that he will put away from us all hurtful things, and give us all those things which are profitable for us: that he will preserve us from all evil, and make all things work together for our good: that he will bless and sanctify all occurrences to us, so that whatsoever happens we shall be some way or other the better for it: that he will supply us with all things necessary for the life, and godliness: that he will hide us under the shadow of his wings, that the destroying angel may not come near to touch us: that he will keep us by his almighty power, through faith, unto salvation. In short, upon our seeking the Lord heartily upon all occasions, while we are upon earth, we shall find that he will carry us through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, so as to bring us at last to himself in heaven, where we shall seek him no more, but enjoy him for ever: and all through the merits and intercession of his only son, our only mediator and advocate, Jesus Christ: *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N CXXIII.

The way of pleasing God.

I Theff. iv. 1.

Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us, how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

ALTHOUGH we may differ, perhaps, about some things, there is one thing, I dare say, we all agree in; we all agree in this, that the world did not make itself, but that it was made by almighty God, who is therefore called *Jehovah*, essence, or being itself, because as he existeth in and of himself, so he gives essence and existence to all things else. All things else subsisting so continually in him, that as nothing could be made, so nothing can continue in its being one moment without him. And seeing we all agree in this, we cannot but likewise all acknowledge, that this almighty being, who made and upholds the world, doth likewise govern and dispose of all, and every thing that is in it; for seeing all things depend continually upon him, all things must needs be continually subject to his divine will and pleasure; who is therefore said to do *whatsoever he pleaseth*, Psal. cxv. 3. and that too, *in heaven, in the earth, in the sea, and in all the deep places*, Psal. cxxxv. 6. that is, in the whole world. The whole world is his, he doth what he will with it, and with every thing that is in it. He hath all the angels in heaven at his beck, and all the devils in hell at his foot: he gives bounds to the sea; he ballanceth the clouds; he governs the winds; he weighs the mountains, and numbeth the very hairs of every man's head; he exalteth one man, and he depresseth another; he makes rich, and he makes poor; he preserveth health, and he bringeth sickness; he gives life, and he takes it away when he pleaseth. So that we and all things in the world are entirely under his command, and at his disposal; he may do with us what he will; for it is in him that *we live, and move, and have our being*.

AND if so, how happy must they needs be, who are in the favour of this supreme and all-glorious governour of the world, so as to have him well-pleased with them, and with what they do? this is so great a happiness, that none can apprehend it, but they who have it: but they know, they feel it to be not only the greatest, but the only true felicity their nature is capable of. And yet, blessed be God for it, we all, as yet, are capable of it, and may most certainly attain it too, if we do but take the right course in order to it; for St. Paul here puts the *Thessalonians* in mind, that they had received of him, how they might so walk as to please God. Which plainly shews, that it is not only possible for us little mortals upon earth, to please the great God of heaven, but that St. Paul knew it himself, and had taught the *Thessalonians* how to do it. And therefore we need not despair, but that having so many of his writings,

and others too of the same divine stamp, we also may from thence learn the true art and method of pleasing God.

AN art of such mighty use, so necessary for all christians to learn and practise, that we never find the apostle pressing any thing more earnestly upon them, than he doth this; he calls them brethren, to shew, that what he now said to them, proceeded merely from his brotherly love and kindness to them: he prays, he beseecheth, he exhorteth them, not in his own name neither, but in the name of Jesus Christ; in his name that loved them so, as to give himself for them; in his name, who was so great a friend to them, as to lay down his own life to redeem theirs; in his name who is their only mediator and advocate in heaven. In his name he beseecheth and exhorteth them, that as they had received of him how they ought to walk, that is, how they ought to order the whole course of their lives, so as to please God, so they would abound in it; that they would not only do it, but do it every day more and more; *Furthermore, saith he, we beseech you brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.*

THE apostle, before the writing of this epistle to them, had been among the *Thessalonians*, and had preached the gospel to them; and they had received the word he preached, *not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the word of God, which effectually worketh in them who believe*, cap. ii. 13. and, in my text, he reminds them of one of the principal things which they had so receiv'd of him, even, *how they ought to walk, and to please God*. And not doubting but they had already set upon the practice of what he had then taught them, he now adds moreover, that he would have them to abound in it, to do it more sincerely, more exactly, more constantly every day than other.

IF those divine discourses which the apostle then made to them, had been now extant, we need have gone no further, to be fully instructed in the great art of pleasing God. But the Holy Ghost did not see it necessary to leave them upon record, having given us sufficient directions about it in the scriptures, which were written by his inspiration, and have been preserv'd by his infinite power and goodness to this day. Out of which, therefore, I shall endeavour, by his assistance, to give you what light I can into it, that you may all know how you ought to walk so as to please God: for which purpose we shall consider,

- I. *What it is properly to please God.*
- II. *What we must do, that we may please God.*
- III. *How it comes to pass, that any thing we do pleases God.*
- IV. *How happy they are who walk so as to please God.*

As to the first, when we speak of pleasing God, we must not think that he is moved or affected in himself, by any thing that we do, as we are apt to be; for he being a most pure, simple, uncompounded, infinite, immutable, eternal act, cannot be subject to any passion; but whatsoever is, or is not done in the world, it is all one to him, he is still the same, without variableness or shadow of change. In which sense we may truly say with him in *Job*, *is it any pleasure to the almighty that thou art righteous? or is it any profit to him that thou makest thy way perfect*, *Job. xxii. 3.* no surely, he being infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself and his own perfections, cannot possibly receive any accessions of pleasure or profit, by any thing which the creatures do, who can do nothing but what he himself enableth them to do. But howsoever, in the revelations that he hath made of himself, and of his divine will to mankind, he is pleased so far to condescend to our shallow and weak capacities, as to represent himself and his actions towards us, under the name and notion of such passions or affections as we ourselves are subject to, that so we may the better understand them. Thus when we do amiss, he represents himself as angry with us; not that he is moved to any such passion in himself; but because his actions then are such, in a higher degree, as ours use to be towards those that we are angry with. And when we do well, he represents himself as pleased with us, because he then manifesteth and carrieth himself to us, as we do to those with whom we are pleased: and so we are properly said to please God, when we do such things for which he is pleased to signify his good-will, his favour and pleasure towards us.

WHAT

WHAT these things are, is the next thing to be considered: and it deserves our most serious consideration; for we all, I dare say, desire to please God; and therefore cannot but be solicitous to know how to do it: neither is it any difficult matter to find it out; for if we do but consult our own breasts, we cannot but find and feel within ourselves, that whenever any thing goes cross to our wills, it disturbs and offends us, raising in our minds that passion which we call anger or displeasure. And, on the other side, when any thing is done according to our wills, or falls out as we would have it, then our minds are at rest and quiet, and we find in ourselves a secret kind of delight and pleasure in it, and in the person that doth it. So here, almighty God, in his holy word, hath revealed his divine will to us, what he would have us do, and what he would have us not do. Now when we do that which he would not, or do not that which he would have done, we act contrary to his will, and so offend and provoke him to anger. But when we leave that undone, which he would not have done, or do that which he would have us do, then we act according to his own will, and therefore please him; especially if we therefore do it that we may please him, or in pure obedience to his revealed will. Hence, *Samuel saith, that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of lambs*, 1 Sam. xv. 22. that is, sincere obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him, than all the sacrifices of the mosaick law, because, tho' they also were commanded by him, yet they were not commanded for themselves, but to make up the defects of mens obedience to the moral law another way. Whereas to do that which he would have us, meerly because he would have us do it, is, in itself, an actual and sincere fulfilling of his will, and therefore cannot but be very grateful and pleasing to him.

HENCE therefore, whatsoever it is that God hath commanded us to do, and so hath signified his will and pleasure that we should do it, by doing of that we certainly please him. Thus it was that our blessed saviour pleased God, through the whole course of his life, because the whole course of it was but one continu'd act of obedience to the divine will, *the father, saith he, hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him*, John viii. 29. and the reason was, because *he did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: he went about doing good; he did the will of him who sent him, and finished the work which God had given him to do*, John iv. 34. cap. xvii. 4. and his whole life being so exactly agreeable to the will of God, he could not but always please him: insomuch, that both at his baptism any transfiguration, God publicly declar'd himself well-pleased with him, by a voice from heaven, saying, *this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*, Matt. ii. 17. cap. xvii. 5.

AND as our saviour did, so may we always please God, if we always do his will; doing his will and pleasing him, being, in effect, but one and the same thing; and therefore where it is testify'd of *Enoch*, that he *walked with God*, Gen. v. 22, 24, the seventy render it, *Καὶ ἐνέπρεσσε τῷ θεῷ*, *he pleased God*; and that this is the true meaning of the phrase, is confirmed by the Holy Ghost himself, saying of *Enoch*, that *before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God*, Heb. xi. 5. from whence it is evident, that walking with God is the same with pleasing of him; and that he therefore pleased him because he walked with him. That is, the whole course of his life was such as God would have it, running parallel all along with his will; so that he walked, as it were, in the same path with God himself, being holy, according to his capacity, as God is holy, in all manner of conversation; and so far as we thus walk with God, as he did, so far we may be confident, that God is pleased with us, as he was with him. And therefore, to understand how to please God, we need do no more than consult his holy word, and consider what he hath there commanded or forbidden us to do. And if we avoid what he hath forbidden, and do what he hath commanded, we may have the same testimony from God, as *Enoch* had, that we please him: for, by this means, we shall *walk worthy of the Lord, to all well-pleasing*, as the apostle speaks, Col. i. 10. *and continue in God's love*, John xv. 10.

BUT hoping that you all desire in good earnest to please God, and for that purpose to understand more distinctly how to do it, I shall instance, more especially, in such things as almighty God hath, in a particular manner, signified his pleasure and delight in, the more to excite and encourage us to exercise ourselves

selves continually in them. And they are such as respect either himself or our neighbours.

First, IN respect of himself; he is much pleased with our fearing and trusting on him. I join them together, because he himself doth so, saying, *the Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy*, Psal. cxlvii. 11. whereby we are given to understand, that they who sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and make him their fear and their dread, so as to fear no thing, or person in the world but him, but fear him so as to make it their constant care never to break his laws, dishonour his name, or offend his divine majesty, upon any accompt, although they were sure to gain never so much by it, they so far please God, that he takes delight in them. And so he doth too in those who trust in his mercy; that is, who in the various changes and chances of this mortal life, keep their hearts always fixed, trusting in the Lord, and in him only, to prevent the evils they fear, and remove those they feel; to keep them from temptation, or enable them to overcome it; to supply them with all things necessary both for life and godliness; to order every thing that happens, so as to make it turn to their advantage; and so support themselves in all conditions, with a sure trust and confidence on his infinite goodness and mercy to them. They who do thus, may be sure that they are highly in God's favour, he being so pleased with them for it, that he takes them into his own protection, and never fails to give them what they hope for aright from him, if it be really good for them; and if it be not, he gives them something that is so instead of it. Indeed, there is nothing that I know of whereby we can honour, and, by consequence, please God more, than by living with a constant dependance upon him to direct, assist, and bless us in what we do, and to give us all things we can desire, to make us holy and happy for ever; so that we may truly say with the psalmist, *blessed are all they who put their trust in him*, Psal. ii. ult.

THE same may be said of our loving God, as our chiefest good, desiring and seeking his favour before all things else, submitting our wills entirely to his, and resting fully satisfied in our minds with every thing that he doth: for such holy and divine acts of the soul as these are, can proceed from none, but from God himself, and therefore cannot but be very pleasing to him, as every thing is that he himself doth. But in all his holy word he hath no ways expressed himself more pleased with any thing, than with the repentance and conversion of a sinner: for this we have not only his word but his oath too. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live*, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. when the wicked man, who was born, and hath lived all along in sin, when this man turns from his former course of life, leaves off his sins, and becomes a new man, observing all the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways that lead to everlasting life, this is the man that God takes pleasure in, more than in the death of the wicked; yea, in some sense, more than in the life of the righteous; as our saviour intimates in the parable of the lost sheep, where he assures us, that there is *joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety nine just persons who need no repentance*, Luke xv. 7. and especially in that of the prodigal son, who coming to himself, and therefore returning to his father, with what joy and pleasure doth his father receive him? when he saw him a great way off, he had *compassion on him*, he ran, he fell on his neck, and kissed him. He called for the best robe, and put it on him; he put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: he said to his servants, *bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry*. And when his other son, who had served him faithfully all along, seemed to be troubled at it, he mildly rebuked him, saying, *son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found*, Luke xv. 31, 32. which is certainly the most lively representation that could be made of the great joy that almighty God is pleased to take in the conversion of a sinner; and should make all sinners, such as we all are, resolve, without any more ado, to return from their sins to God, that so they may be in the number of those blessed souls, with which the supreme governour of the whole world is so much pleased.

BUT tho' the first conversion of sinners, and their admission into the catalogue of saints be thus in a peculiar manner pleasing unto God, yet he is pleased likewise with all the faithful services which they afterwards perform to him; especially

cially with their solemn and devout addresses to him: *for the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight.* Prov. xv. 8. whereby is signified to us, that God himself delights both in the private and publick devotions of his people: and, by consequence, if we would continue in his favour, and have him, always pleased with us, as we must often retire into our closets, and there pray to our father in secret, so we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but take all the opportunities that we can get of presenting ourselves together before him, to beg his mercy in the pardon of our sins, to implore his aid and assistance against temptations, and to supplicate his divine goodness, and give us that measure of his grace and holy spirit, whereby we may be able to serve him, with a perfect heart and a willing mind; and to supply us with all things else, which he knows to be needful for us.

BUT above all, when we meet together, we must never forget to praise and magnify his most holy name. This being one of the most acceptable services we can ever perform to him; far beyond all the sacrifices of the law; *I will praise the name of God, saith David, with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving; this also shall please the Lord, better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs,* Psal. lxii. 30, 31. when an ox or bullock had horns and hoofs, he was judged fit to be offered up in sacrifice; yet how fit soever he was, the offering of praise and thanksgiving, was even in those days, the more acceptable sacrifice unto God: and therefore, *David used to offer it up seven times a day; seven times a day, saith he, do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments,* Psal. cxix. 164. not that he stinted himself to so many times and no more, but that seven times a day was the least that he usually did it: for he being a man after God's own heart, could not but take all occasions of admiring and praising his great name; which offering themselves continually, he could not but continually do it, as we see all along in the psalms composed by him, which are all but as one continued song of praise and thanksgiving, unto the most high God. And if we would always please God, we also must be always praising of him; wheresoever we are, still lifting up our hearts unto him, in praise and thanksgiving for the mercies we receive continually from him, *speaking to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts unto the Lord, giving thanks always, for all things, unto God and the father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,* Eph. v. 19, 20. from whence we may observe, that this is a duty we ought to be always employ'd in, and that by this means we make melody in our hearts; unto the Lord, that is, our singing and praising him in our heart, sounds so melodiously in his ears, that he is as much delighted and pleased with it, as a skilful ear is affected with a well-tuned song.

ESPECIALLY when we meet together in the church-militant, we ought to join with the church-triumphant, in singing hallelujahs to him, calling upon one another to praise the Lord: as *David doth no less than four times in one psalm, saying, O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men,* Psal. cvii. and hence it is, that psalms and hymns make so great a part of our publick prayers, and renders them so pleasing and acceptable to almighty God, that they who always join sincerely in them, may be sure that they always please him. But that we may do it the more effectually, we must observe the apostle's rule (as our church doth in her publick liturgy) even that our *prayers, supplications and intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority.* For this, saith he, *is good and acceptable in the sight of God our saviour,* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3. and we must also take all opportunities we can get of receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper; whereby, as we offer unto God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, so he doth thereby assure us of his favour and goodness towards us (as our church expresseth it) that he is well-pleased with us, and with what we do: it being only by him, whose body and blood we there receive, that either that or any other service we perform to God is accepted of him; as we shall see more presently.

AND as for the duties which we owe to one another, almighty God hath declared himself particularly pleased with childrens obedience to parents; *children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord,* Col. iii. 20.

1 Tim. v. 4.

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AND

AND also with veracity, justice and charity: with veracity, or speaking the truth always from the heart; for *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight*, Prov. xxi. 22. with justice, or dealing honestly and uprightly, so as not to wrong, or cheat, or over-reach one another, but to *do to all men as they would have them do to us, for the false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight*, Prov. xi. 1, 20. yea, to *do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice*, Prov. xxi. 3. and then for charity, or the liberal contribution to the relief of others necessities, that the apostle calls, *an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto God*, Phil. iv. 18. and therefore he elsewhere saith, *but to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is pleased*, Heb. xiii. 16.

THERE are many other things which God is pleased with; who indeed is pleased with every thing we do according to his will. But I have instanced more particularly in these, because God himself doth so in his holy word: from whence we may most certainly conclude, that we can never do any thing which God hath commanded, but he is pleased with the doing of it: but more especially if we do not only do it, but patiently suffer also for the doing it; for *if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God*, 1 Pet. ii. 20.

ACCEPTABLE with God, may some say, how can that be? how can such sinful creatures as we are, ever do any thing pleasing or acceptable with God? are not we all born in sin? do not we all live in sin? is there a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not? yea, that sinneth not in the very good he doth, by not doing it so well as he ought? how then can we do any thing pleasing to God, who is of *purser eyes than to behold iniquity*, and of so pure and holy a nature, that every sin is an offence to him? how then can we expect that he should have respect to us, or to any thing that we do, seeing we do many things contrary to his will, and nothing exactly according to it.

IT is true, if we look no further than ourselves, and our own actions, we may justly despair of ever finding any favour in his sight; but have rather cause to expect that he should be angry and displeased with every thing we do, and with ourselves too, for the doing of it. But blessed be his name, he himself hath found out a way, whereby what we do imperfectly, may be as acceptable in his sight, as if it was perfectly done; and that is, by his son Jesus Christ; *to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*, Eph. i. 6, 7. and therefore St. Peter, speaking to all christians, saith, *ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. so that he makes us perfect in every good work; *to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever*, Heb. xiii. 21. from whence it appears, that not only our persons, but our actions too, are acceptable and well-pleasing to God, though not in themselves, yet by Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom he himself once and again declared himself well-pleased, saying, *this is my beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased*: in whom, not only with whom; whereby he hath assured us, that he is not only well-pleased with him, but in him, with all those also who truly believe in him; and so by faith are united to him, and made members of that body whereof he is head.

AND, verily, as this is the only way whereby it is possible for mankind to please God, so this way, even by faith in Christ, some have done it all along, from the very beginning of the world; as we may see in that famous instance of Abel: for it is written, *that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, an offering to the Lord; and Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but to Cain and his offering he had not respect*, Gen. iv. 3, 4, 5. from whence it appears, that God had respect unto; that is, he accepted of, or was well-pleased with Abel's offering, but not with Cain's; and that they both knew it. But how did they know it? to wave disputes, it seems more than probable, that God manifested his acceptance of Abel's offering, by consuming it with the fire from heaven: as he did Gideon's, Judg. vi. 21. Elijah's, 1 Kings xviii. 38. David's, 1 Chron. xxi. 26. Solomon's, 2 Chron. vii. 1, 3. whereby he signified his acceptance of their offerings, and so he did for the first which Aaron, after his consecration, offered: for when he had slain the bullock and the ram, and laid them in order upon the

the altar, it is said, and there came fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat; which when the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces, Lev. ix. 24. which plainly argues, that the people looked upon this as a certain sign that God accepted of the offering, in that they shouted for joy, and adored him for it.

THIS is that fire which God commanded should be always kept burning upon the altar, Lev. vi. 12. and none of their ordinary sacrifices were accepted of, but such as were consumed by this fire: which therefore was carefully kept burning upon the altar all along till the babylonish captivity. And if we may believe what is written in the second book of *Maccabees*, cap. i. 19. it was revived afterwards. But according to the tradition of the *Jews*, this was one of the five things which were wanting in the second temple. This therefore being the common way whereby God was pleased to express his acceptance of what was offered to him, we may easily conclude, that he manifested his respect to *Abel's* offering, and not to *Cain's*, by consuming that with fire, and not the other's.

BUT why had almighty God respect to *Abel's* offering, and not to *Cain's*? To me the reason seems plainly this, that *Cain* offered only of the fruit of the ground, which had no respect to Christ, but only to God, as the creator of the world; whereas *Abel* offered the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof, which was a bloody sacrifice, typifying the death of Christ, *the lamb slain from the beginning of the world*; and so exercised his faith in the promised Messiah. And therefore the apostle saith, *by faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*, Heb. xi. 4. By faith, that is, by believing the promise which God had made to mankind in Christ, and manifested his faith, by offering such a sacrifice as represented the death of Christ; by whom therefore his sacrifice was well-pleasing and acceptable to God. So *Enoch pleased God*, Heb. xi. 5.

THE same may be said of *Abraham*, who was so highly in the favour of God, that he is called the friend of God, not only by *Jehoshaphat*, 2 *Chron.* xx. 7. but by God himself, saying, *the seed of Abraham my friend*, *Isai.* xli. 8. And he is the only man we ever heard of, that God himself was pleased in so particular a manner to call his friend: yea, he entered into a strict alliance or covenant with him, as one friend doth with another. But how came God to be so much pleased with *Abraham*, above all others? doubtless, the reason was, because he excelled others in his faith in the promised seed, that is, in Christ: as *St. James* intimates, where he saith, *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God*, *Jam.* ii. 23. because he believed God, when he said, *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, therefore he was accepted of as righteous; and therefore was he called the friend of God. Which plainly shews, that the great reason why God was so pleased with *Abraham*, and with what he did, was upon the account of Christ, because he believed in him, as promised by almighty God. The same may be said of all the patriarchs, prophets and saints in the old testament, as also of those under the new; for none ever did or can do any thing pleasing and acceptable to God, but only by Jesus Christ our Lord; but by him, there are none of us but may so walk as to please God.

FOR by him we may be assisted in what we do, with the holy spirit of God himself, who, proceeding as from the father, so likewise from the son, cannot but actuate and influence all that are by faith united to him, and made sound members of his body; by which means his grace is always sufficient for them; his strength is made perfect in their weakness, and the power of Christ rests continually upon them, 2 *Cor.* xii. 9. the word is ἐπιστηνών, it dwells in a peculiar manner in them, as the שכינה or divine presence did in the temple. Hence every true christian may say with the apostle, *I can do all things through Christ that strengthneth me*, *Phil.* iv. 13. the Holy Ghost himself being, as the same apostle speaks, *shed on them abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, *Tit.* iii. 5, 6. by whom therefore they are enabled not only to walk worthy of God, but likewise unto all well-pleasing; for God is always well-pleased with what he himself doth; but what they do, is done by him, and his holy spirit, working in them both to will and to do: and therefore it cannot but be acceptable to him, at least so far as it proceedeth from himself, and is begun, carried on, and finished by his own holy spirit co-operating with them.

BUT

BUT notwithstanding the supernatural grace which we receive from God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, yet, by reason of the corruption of our nature, and our manifold infirmities, we cannot, or at least we do not, make that use of it, as thereby to adjust any of our actions perfectly to the will of God: but do what we can, we either go beyond or come short of it. And although, so far as his own grace concurs in what we do, so far it is, doubtless, pleasing to God; yet so far as we ourselves are concerned (as we always are) in any action, so far it is imperfect, and therefore must needs offend him, whose nature is perfection itself. Hence therefore our blessed saviour, to put us into a capacity of pleasing God, doth not only assist us with his own grace in what we do, but hath made satisfaction also for our failures in the doing of it; for he was made a *propitiation for our sins*, 1 John ii. 1. for all our sins, not only for others, but likewise for those sins which God's all-seeing eye observes in our best performances: yea, *he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. that is, that although we are not perfectly so in ourselves or actions, yet God might accept of us as righteous in him, by virtue of that perfect obedience and righteousness which he performed in our nature and stead; who is therefore said to be made our *righteousness*, as well as our *sanctification*, 1 Cor. i. 30. our sanctification to assist us in what we do, and our righteousness to make it acceptable to God, when it is done. But for both these purposes, it is necessary that we actually believe in him; for it is to our faith in Christ, that the scriptures all along ascribe both our sanctification, and likewise the justification, both of our persons and our actions before God, Heb. xi. 6.

BUT these things, thus briefly touched upon, you may easily perceive, how you may so walk as to please God: for do but sincerely endeavour, to the utmost of your knowledge and power, to do all such good works as God hath prepared for you to walk in, *and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, Col. iii. 17. so as to believe and trust on him at the same time, both for his assisting of you in the doing it, and for God's acceptance of it when it is done, and then you may be confident, that God, for his sake, will be well-pleased with what you do, as well as he is with the most perfect services of the glorious saints and angels in heaven.

AND, verily, it is well for us, that we have such a mediator and advocate, who is able to make up all differences, to reconcile almighty God our maker to us, and to prevail with him to accept of any thing that we do; for otherwise what a sad condition had we all been in? he that made us would have been always angry and displeased with us: and what the effects of that would be, no tongue is able to express. God grant, that none of us may ever experience it. Methinks, I cannot so much as think of it without horror and dread, lest I myself, or any one here present, should fall under his displeasure. If his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, what can we do? whither can ye go for shelter? Shall we go to the saints and angels in heaven? they cannot help us if they would. Shall we go to the fiends of hell? they will not help us if they could. Shall we go to our fellow-mortals upon earth? they neither can nor will help us, their hands and their hearts too being wholly at his command; so that he can arm them all, when he pleases, against us, and make every thing that is, a distinct executioner of his divine vengeance upon us; yea, he can set us against ourselves, and make our own consciences fly like so many furies in our faces, and wrack and torment us continually. He can make all things run cross to us, and vex us; yea, he can make us vexed at every thing, whether any thing gives us any cause or no. And that which is worst of all, he can make us possess all our iniquities together, and fill our souls with such a sense of his wrath and indignation against us for them, that we should not be able to endure ourselves, nor bear up under it, but should immediately sink down to nothing, if he himself did not uphold us by his almighty power, for the honour of his justice, and to make us know and feel what it is to offend our maker. This, and infinitely more than we are able to conceive, he can do, not only at what time he will, but to all eternity. Can, did I say? yea, and will too, unless we take care to appease his wrath we have already kindled, and to walk, for the future, so as to please him.

BUT how happy must they needs be, who always do so? who always please God? who please him that made and governs the whole world? they can want nothing, having him who hath all things to supply them. They can desire
nothing

nothing that is good for them, but they may have it at any time, for asking. *Whatsoever we ask, saith St. John, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments; and do those things that are pleasing in his sight,* 1 John iii. 22. they can be no where but they have the best company in the world, for they have him that made it always with them, not only by his essential, but by his special and peculiar presence, to direct them by his wisdom, to assist them by his grace, to comfort them by his spirit, to protect them by his power, and to bless and prosper them by his goodness in all their undertakings. As they walk with God, he walks with them, so as never to leave or forsake them in the least; *He that sent me, saith Christ, is with me: the father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him,* John viii. 29.

MOREOVER, so long as you please God, ye need not care who is displeased with you. If he be your friend, it is no matter what enemies you have? for *when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him,* Prov. xvi. 7. he hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and can turn and wind them which way he will. He can allay their choler, assuage their wrath, restrain their fury, and turn their hatred into love and friendship. He gave *Joseph* favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison, *Gen xxxix.* he gave *Daniel* love and favour in the eyes of the prince of the Eunuchs, *Dan. i.* *Psal. cvi. 46.* and so he can give you favour, when he pleaseth, in the sight of the worst enemies you have in the world, so as to make them your best friends: and how long soever he may suffer their choler to boil in their breasts, he can keep it from breaking forth either at their hands or tongues; so that whatsoever they think, or wish, they shall not be able to speak or do you any ill: as we see in *David*, who being a man after God's own heart, tho' *Saul* hated him mortally, and hunted him like a partridge upon the mountains, yet he could never catch him, nor come near to hurt him. And so long as the children of *Israel* pleased God, tho' all the kingdoms and nations about them were their enemies, *he suffered no man to do them wrong, but reprov'd even kings for their sakes; saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm,* *Psal. cv. 14, 15.* thus whatsoever grudge or hatred they bear you, God can so order it, if he please, that they shall never do you any mischief, but shall live as peaceably with you, as if they were your friends. And, as he can do it, if he pleases, so you may be sure he will be pleased to do it, if you continue to please him.

NEITHER will he make only such enemies as ye have among men, to be at peace with you, but he will cause other creatures to be so too; for *thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee,* Job. v. 23. and lest this should seem strange or impossible, that the very beasts and stones should enter into the league with men, God hath said, that he himself will undertake it; *in that day, saith he, will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and the creeping things of the ground,* *Hos. ii. 18.* that is, he will take care that no creature shall hurt those who please him their creator. As we see he hath done all along. The water that drown'd the *Egyptians*, made way for the children of *Israel* to pass through it: the fire could not scorch one hair of the three children that were thrown into the furnace: the hungry lions could not seize upon *Daniel*, when he was in the den, in the midst of them: and tho' a viper fasten'd upon *St. Paul's* hand, it fell off again without doing any harm. The same may be said of the powers of hell, they may shew their malice, but they cannot execute it, as *Balaam* found by experience, saying, *surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel,* *Numb. xxiii. 23.* thus all they who please God are always safe and secure from danger; they need not fear what men or devils, or any creature in the world can do unto them. So long as the creator himself is pleased with them, tho' all creatures in heaven and earth should combine together, they could not hurt them.

NOT hurt them, did I say? so far from that, that the whole creation, and all and every thing that is in it, shall concur to do them good; for we know, saith the apostle, *that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose,* *Rom. viii. 28.* and it cannot be otherwise; for all things depending every thing one upon another, and all upon God, acting and moving under him, they cannot but always produce what he pleaseth. But he is always pleased to do them good who please him: and therefore all things being influenced by him, must needs do so too. By

which means they are as happy as all the creatures in the world can make them.

BUT above all, they who please God, are happy upon that very account, because they please God: because they please him who is the center and the fountain of all the happiness that mankind is capable of, and communicates it to all those, and to none but those who please him, by manifesting himself to be pleased with them; *in his pleasure is life*, said *David*, Psal. xxx. 5. that is, all the joy and happiness of the soul, it all not only depends upon, but consisteth in the favour and pleasure of God.

TO have the light of his countenance shining upon us, and by it to behold his special love and kindness to us, his pleasure and delight in us, and shewing himself to be reconciled to us, and well-pleased with us; this is that blessed sight, which we call the beatifick vision, the sight that fills the soul with love, and light, and joy, and bliss, and happiness, as full as ever it can hold. This is the greatest, or rather, the only true happiness that our souls are capable of. And so far as we please God, so far we may partake of it, even in this life: but in the next, we shall have it perfectly, because we shall perfectly please God for ever.

THESE things being duly weighed, are sufficient to prevail with all sober and considering persons, to make it their great care and design, for the future, to please God, and to approve themselves to him, in every thing they think, or speak, or do. Wherefore I need say no more, but shall conclude, as I began, with the words of my text, *furthermore then we beseech you brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.*

S E R M O N CXXIV.

The Parable of the Sower.

M A T T. xiii. 18.

Hear ye therefore the Parable of the Sower.

AMONG the great blessings which this kingdom enjoys above most others, there is none greater than that the pure word of God is so constantly read and preach'd in it, and that by officers authoriz'd and appointed by Christ himself, and therefore assisted by his holy spirit, in the doing of it. By which means, one would think, that the whole nation in general, and all particular persons in it, should be wise and holy, and just, and good, every way such as God would have them, seeing they have his will so fully revealed to them, by his word sounding continually in their ears, and set before their eyes too, in as clear a light as ever shone upon earth, since the *sun of righteousness* himself was here. And yet, to our great astonishment and admiration, as well as to our grief and sorrow, we may observe, that a great part of this nation,

tion, if not the far greatest, are as ignorant of God, as negligent of their duty to him, as envious and malicious against one another, as proud, as factious, as intemperate, as lascivious, as unjust, as uncharitable, every way as vicious in their lives and actions, as if they had never heard one tittle of God's word in all their lives.

THIS I have often thought of; and have as often wondered what should be the reason of it. Many have offered themselves as concurring towards it; but I could never be fully satisfied about it, but from this parable of the sower; wherein Christ himself hath given us the best and clearest account of it, that ever was or can be given. For indeed none else could ever truly do it, but he who knows mens hearts, and sees how his word is received therein, what impediments it meets with at its entrance, what entertainment it hath when gotten in, and how it comes to pass that it is sometimes kept, and sometimes cast out again. Men can only guess at these things, but Christ knows them perfectly; and therefore hath been pleased to give us a perfect account of the whole matter in this parable, beginning, *ver. 3.*

3. *Behold, saith he, a sower went forth to sow.*

4. *And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.*

5. *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: And forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.*

6. *And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had not root, they withered away.*

7. *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choaked them.*

8. *But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.*

THIS is the parable itself, which when our Lord had uttered, and had resolved the disciples question, why he spoke to the people in parables, he explains to them the full meaning of it; and that they might take the more notice of it, he begins with these words, *hear ye therefore the parable of the sower:* as if he had said, ye that are my disciples and apostles, and so must both learn my mind yourselves, and teach it to others, do ye hearken diligently to this parable, for it will be of great use to you in both respects.

AND so verily it is, both to the ministers that preach, and to the people that hear the word of God. It is of great use to us, because it shews us the reason why our ministry is not always so successful, as we could wish it was. For ye may easily imagine that it is a great trouble and discouragement, to us, to preach the word of God time after time, for many years together, and yet see little or no effect of it upon those who hear us: but after we have done and said all we can, most part of them are not one jot the wiser, or the better for what we have said or done. Tho' we tell you what almighty God would have you to believe, yet you will not believe it; tho' we tell you what he would have you do, yet ye will not do it: I am sorry I can speak this upon mine own experience. I could instance in several particulars, wherein I have often told you, as plainly as I could, what duties you ought to perform to God, but I see, as plainly, that ye do not perform them. And this is the case of most ministers: I wish I could not say of all. All that we say, is like water spilt upon the ground: or, as the apostle expresseth it, it is but beating the air; men give us the hearing, and that is all. Which we cannot but all be troubled at: for it makes us sometimes suspect that the fault is in ourselves, that we do not do our duty as we ought; that we do not preach often enough, or not plain enough, or not pressing enough, or some way or other fail in the discharge of the office, which God hath committed to us, notwithstanding that we take all the care that we can in it. The thoughts of which would be enough to dishearten us from going on, lest we should enhance our own reckoning at the last-day, but that our great master himself hath shewn us, in this parable, that the fault is chiefly in the people: that altho' we do our duty never so well, yet we must not always expect that success which we desire of it; for there is still something or other in the people that hinders it. Tho' the seed we sow be never so good, and tho' we sow it with all the care and prudence that we can, yet, after all, the most part of it will be lost, because the ground we sow it in is bad; so bad, that we have great cause to bless God, if any of it comes to perfection.

AND

AND as we who preach, so ye that hear the word of God, may be much edify'd by this parable. I say, may, not will be; for I fear that my preaching upon it will have no more effect, than what is intimated in the parable itself, such as other sermons use to have, that is, very little, if any at all. But if ye be not wanting to yourselves in hearkening to it, I am sure ye may receive great instruction and edification from it: for ye cannot but be sensible of your great unprofitableness under the means of grace, having heard many hundreds, perhaps several thousands of sermons in your life, and yet are no way the better for it, if not much worse; and ye cannot but wonder what should be the reason of it. But here ye have the reason of it plainly set down before your eyes; you may see where the fault lies, and, by consequence, if ye have any regard for your souls, mend it for the future. Which that ye may, I would desire you to apply what is said all along, every one to himself, and consider which part of the parable toucheth him, or cometh the nearest to his case: for there is not one person in the congregation, but what is particularly concerned in something or other that is said in it, as ye will all find, by the time that we have gone quite through it.

BUT before we descend to the part of it, there are several things worthy to be observed in the whole. For here we may first observe in general, that the seed that was sown was all of the same sort, and of the same goodness: there was not one sort of seed sown in bad ground, and another in good, but the same in both; and therefore the reason why it grew better in one place than another, could not be from the seed itself. And so the reason why the word preached profits some more than others, cannot be from the word itself, for that is the same in all.

Secondly, WE may observe, that as the seed was the same, so was the sower. *Behold*, saith Christ, *a sower went forth to sow*: one sower: the seed was all sown by the same hand; with the same art and care: and therefore the fault could not be in the sower, no more than in the seed, why any of it perished. So here, altho' the same preacher preacheth the same word of God, yet it hath not the same effect upon all; but some are profited by it, others not: which therefore cannot be imputed to the preacher.

Thirdly, WE may likewise observe, that as the same sower sowed the same seed, so he did it at the same time; for he went forth but once: he did not sow some seed at one time of the year, and some at another; then the season or the weather might have made great alteration; but he sowed it altogether: and therefore neither can the seasonableness nor unseasonableness of the time be pleaded, why some should grow better than other. And so it is in preaching, altho' the same person preacheth the same word of God, at the same time, yet it shall not have the same effect upon all; but some are edified by it, others not. And it cannot be said that it was in season to those, and out of season to these; for the season was one and the same to both.

IN the next place, we may observe, that although the seed, the sower, and the time was all one and the same, yet the event was different four several ways: some was picked up by the birds, some withered away, some was choaked with thorns, and some brought forth fruit. And there are as many differences in hearing God's word; some do not mind it; some mind it, but do not retain it; some retain, but do not practise it; and some mind, retain and practise it too.

Lastly, WE may observe, that of these four events of the seed sown, three were bad, and but only one good; for three parts were lost, to one that came to perfection: and it would be well if the difference was no greater in the word preached, if but one in three could be wrought upon effectually by it. But we have just cause to fear, that this is the least, especially in our age, wherein it is rare to find one in ten, or perhaps in twenty, that set themselves in good earnest, to avoid what they hear to be forbidden, and to do what they hear to be commanded by God. But whatsoever the event be, the word must be preached, the seed must be sown; and therefore I shall scatter it among you, and do ye take care to improve it, every one to his own advantage, that ye may not be in the number of any of the three first, but of the last sort of hearers, mentioned in this parable, such as profit by what they hear, so as to bring forth fruit meet for repentance.

For which purpose, we shall now consider the several parts of the parable; and that ye may understand them all the better, I shall set them down as they lie in order, each part distinctly by itself, and then explain the meaning which Christ himself hath given us of it; and commanded us to take special notice of it, saying, *hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.*

First, THEREFORE, behold, saith our Lord, a sower went forth to sow, and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up, St. Luke adds, that it was trodden down, as seed that is sown by the way-side, use to be by passengers. But as St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke, have all recorded this parable, as being of great use to the church, so they all agree in saying, that the fowls of the air devoured the seed by the way-side.

Now let us hear our saviour's explication of it, when, he saith, any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he which receiveth seed by the way-side, Matt. xiii. 19. St. Luke expresseth it something plainer, saying, these by the way-side, are they that hear, then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved, Luke viii. 12.

By comparing these, and likewise St. Mark's gospel together, we may easily understand what is meant in the parable by the seed, by the sower, by the way-side, by the fowls of the air, and how and why they devoured it.

By the seed is meant, the word of the kingdom, as St. Matthew calls it, or as St. Luke, the word of God, the great king of heaven and earth, the word which he hath spoken, and caused to be written down concerning his kingdom of grace and glory. St. Mark calls it *ἡ ῥήσις*, the word, as infinitely exceeding all the words that ever were or can be spoken by men. And this word may well be compared to seed, as appearing but small and contemptible, and yet having such a prolifick and generative faculty in it, that it increaseth and multiplies, and brings forth fruit, according to the nature of the ground, as all seed commonly doth where it is sown.

By the sower, is meant Christ; as he himself saith in another parable in this chapter, he that soweth the good seed is the son of man, Matt. xiii. 37. it is he by whom the word of God hath been spoken and despersed all along, and still is: we are only his ambassadors, preaching only his word, and that too only in his name and in his stead, 2 Cor. v. 20. and therefore, as the Thessalonians did, so should all men receive it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, 1 Cor. ii. 13. it is his word that we preach and publish; and no man taketh this office upon him, but he who is called and ordained to it by Christ himself: as no man soweth in the field but the master himself, or such of his servants as he appoints and sends out to do it; and if any other presume to do it, it is an enemy, that doth not sow wheat but tares.

By the way-side, is meant such as hear the word, but do not understand it, or, as the word signifies, do not regard or mind it; it doth not sink into them, no more than seed that is sown upon an hard path-way, it lies upon the surface, making no impression at all upon their hearts: tho' they hear it sounding in their ears, they take but little notice of it; for their hearts all the while go after their covetousness, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. their thoughts are generally taken up with other things; one is thinking of his goods; another of his houses or lands; a third of his chapmen; a fourth of his debtors or creditors; a fifth of his relations or acquaintance; a sixth of something he did yesterday; a seventh of something he is to do to morrow or next day. And so thro' the whole congregation, tho' two perhaps may not think of the same thing; there is scarce one but who is thinking of something or other besides the word they hear, which hinders that from having any power at all upon their minds, unless it be perhaps to slight and despise it; as many do, according to what is intimated in the parable, by the seeds being trodden down: for many undervalue the word itself, and trample it under their feet, as not worthy to be regarded by them. It is too plain, or else too pricking; it is no more than what they knew before, or that which they do not care to know. When St. Paul was preaching, the Athenian philosophers cried out, what will this babler say, Acts xvii. 17. and when he spake of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, ver. 52. when Christ himself was preaching, the Pharisees derided him, Luke xvi. 14. and tho' they would sometimes come to hear him, it was only to see if they could catch something out of his mouth,

that they might accuse him, Luk. xi. 54. there are many such hearers of God's word as these, I wish there be not many here at this time. But to all such, the word of God, is like seed sown in the way-side, ready to be caught up and devoured by the fowls of the air.

By the fowls of the air, is meant the wicked one, that is, satan, or the devil, who is called the *prince of the power of the air*, Eph. ii. 2. he and his fiends are always hovering about in the air, especially where the word of God is preached, as birds do over ground that is newly sown, that he may catch up that which falls by the way-side, as soon as he can. He useth all his art to make people dull and sleepy, that they may not hearken at all to the word: and if that will not do it, but they are fully awake, he presents them with one object or other to divert their thoughts; or so soon as sermon is done, he brings somebody to them to talk of worldly affairs, or else finds them work at home: and all to put what they have heard out of their minds, lest they should ruminate upon it, and so digest it into good nourishment for their souls: not that he cares for it himself. It is said indeed, that the fowls of the air devour the seed, but not that the devil devours the word, but only that he catcheth and taketh it away: he doth not devour it; it is no food for him, as being quite contrary to his wicked temper, so that the very thoughts of it, put him into a fit of trembling, as St. James saith, *the devils believe and tremble*, Jam. ii. 19. but why then doth the devil take so much pains to take the word out of mens hearts? St. Luke saith, he doth it, *lest they should believe and be saved*: tho' he hath no appetite to the word, he hath a mind to devour those that hear it, and therefore *walketh about seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. but if God's word should continue any time in mens minds, and they should seriously think upon it, they would *believe and be saved*, which would spoil his game; for then he can never get them into his clutches: and that is the reason that he useth so many tricks to keep men from believing what they hear, as knowing well enough, if he can do that, let them hear as long as they please, they will be never the better; for the word preached never profits, except it be *mixed with faith in them that hear it*, Heb. iv. 2. and it works effectually only in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. and therefore the devil's great design is to keep men from attending, considering, and meditating upon what they hear, so as to believe it as the word of God. And if they do not believe, he is as sure to have them, as they are sure to be saved if they do.

HENCE ye may see where the fault lies, that ye so often hear God's word to no purpose, receiving no profit at all by it: the reason is, because ye do not come rightly prepared and disposed for it, with holy resolutions to believe and practise what ye shall hear, and therefore are careless and negligent in hearing it: ye do not set yourselves in good earnest to attend wholly to it; and to receive it as the word of God; but hear it only by the by; so that it is only as seed scatter'd by chance on the high-way, which the devil observing, takes advantage of it, and by one device or other put it quite out of your minds again; so that ye have no more benefit by it, than as if ye had never heard it. The fault is first in yourselves, otherwise the devil could have no power over you: but when he finds that ye keep no strict guard upon yourselves in hearkening to God's word, nor lay it seriously to your hearts, as ye ought, he bewitcheth and enchants you, so that ye never think of it any more, at least so as to observe and keep it: as the apostle said to the *Galatians*, *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you*, Gal. iii. 1. who hath bewitched you? it is the devil; you being foolish and unmindful of your own good, he bewitcheth you so, that although you hear the word of God over and over again, yet ye will not obey it; but are like the seed by the way-side, that never brings forth fruit.

NEXT to those seeds which thus fell by the way-side, as it follows in the parable, *some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had not root, they withered away*, Matt. xiii. 5, 6. the meaning whereof is thus explained by our saviour: *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it, yet he hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution*
arise,

arise, because of the word, by and by he is offended, ver. 20, 21. so offended as to fall away, as St. Luke expresseth it, Luke viii. 13.

HERE we have another sort of unprofitable hearers described, who attend to the word preached, and receive it not as the first did, only upon the top, but into their hearts and affections; for they receive it with joy and gladness, being very much pleased with the good news of the gospel, to hear of the pardon of their sins, of God's sending his son to be their saviour, of his dying for them, and of their obtaining eternal salvation by him: this affects them so, that they begin to walk in the way to life, and make some progress in it; but they do not go far, the least rub they meet with puts them out of the way. The word they heard was like seed sown in stony places, or upon a rock, as it is in St. Luke, where it hath some, but very little earth, enough to cover it, that the birds might not pick it up, but not enough for the root to spread in; and therefore it may lie there for some time; but when the weather grows hot, it is scorched, and having no root, withers away.

THERE have been many such hearers of God's word, such were the common people among the Jews, who heard Christ gladly, *Mark xii. 47.* but afterwards cried out, *crucify him, crucify him:* such was Herod, who feared John the baptist, and when he heard him preach, he did many things, and heard him gladly, *Mark. vi. 20.* but for all that he afterwards beheaded him: such was Agrippa, when he said to St. Paul, upon his preaching of God's word, *almost thou persuadest me to be a christian, Acts xxvi. 28.* but, after all, would not be one: such was the young-man in the gospel, who asked our saviour, what he must do that he might have eternal life? and therefore was, doubtless, very well disposed to do any thing for it; but when Christ told him, that he must sell all and follow him, *he went away sorrowful, Matt. xix. 21.* such were many of Christ's own disciples, who had heard gladly a good while, but when he had preached to them about his being the bread of life, because they did not understand him, *went back and walked no more with him, John vi. 66.* There are many such amongst us at this time, who hear the word of God gladly, who do many things cheerfully, who are almost persuaded to be christians, who delight in drawing nigh to God, and performing their devotions to him, who take a great deal of pains in serving God, and doing good for some time, perhaps for a good while; but when tribulation or persecution arise, because of the word, when they cannot perform their duty to God, without trouble or danger to themselves, when they must not only do, but suffer also for Christ if they will continue with him, then they are offended and fall away, leaving him and his service for the drudgery of sin, the world and the devil; and all because they were not well settled in religion, the root of the matter was not in them, as Job speaks, *Job xix. 28.* or as St. Paul, they were not rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith, *Col. ii. 7.* but like the seed that was sown upon a rock, where having no root, it must needs wither away.

THE third and last sort of seed, in the parable, which brought forth no fruit, were those which fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them, *Matt. xiii. 7.* In St. Luke it is, *συμπεφυκεν αἱ ἀνὰ θάμνους, the thorns sprung up together with the seed, and so choked it,* by overpowering it, and forcing that nourishment from it, which would have enabled it to bring forth fruit: but how could that be? do thorns use to grow up together with corn? I answer, it may well be so, supposing that the seed was sown in a ground where thorns were lately cut down; and the roots left in the ground, for then the thorns and the corn might grow up together. But we need not that supposition, to resolve the question; for tho' corn doth not, thorns usually grow of themselves. There must be plowing and sowing and a great deal of pains taken to make corn grow: but the ground naturally brings forth briars and thorns, ever since it was cursed for man's sake; when God said, to Adam upon his eating of the forbidden fruit, *Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, Gen. iii. 17, 18, 19.* which threatening we see fulfilled to this day; for bread cannot be eaten, because corn, of which it is made, doth not grow without the sweat of mens brows; but as for thorns and thistles, men need not labour for them, the ground brings them forth of itself, as God said it should, by the same almighty word, whereby he commanded

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it before to bring forth grafs for the use of men : and therefore thorns may be well supposed to grow in any ground where seeds are sown, and to grow up with it, as it is supposed to do in the parable.

BUT let us now hear the meaning of this part of the parable, *he also, saith our saviour, that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choak the word, and he becometh unfruitful*, ver. 22. To the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, St. Mark adds, *the lusts and desires of other things* : and so St. Luke reckons them up by the name of the *cares, riches and pleasures of this life*, which, according to St. John, make up the sum-total of this world, and all that is in it, 1 John ii. 16. These are those thorns which choak the seed when it is grown up ; for this seed was not sown by the way-side, so as to be devoured by the birds, nor upon a rock, so as to have no depth of earth to take root in, but it was sown in plow'd mellow ground, where it had good rooting, so that the stalk sprung up to the very ear ; yet, after all, the thorns that grew up with it, hindred it from ripening.

THERE be many such hearers of God's word, who are not so careless of what they hear as to suffer the devil to take it from them, nor so ill-grounded in religion, as not to understand what they ought to believe and do, but hear the word, so as to mind it, and in some measure, endeavour to live according to it ; and this also to the very time of harvest, or all their life long, so that there seem to be great hopes of fruit in them ; and yet the cares, the riches, or the pleasures of this life spoil all, so that nothing comes to perfection ; tho' their minds be never so well cultivated by the word, and ready to bring forth fruit meet for repentance, yet they cannot do it, being over-power'd by some thing or other in this world. They take some care to serve God, but more to serve the world ; they have some desire of heavenly, but more of earthly riches ; they take some delight in doing good, but more in other things. And so all the good inclinations which the word of God had wrought in their hearts, are overcome and stifled, either with the cares, or with the riches, or else with the pleasures of this life.

First, THE cares of this life are of such a suffocating nature, that they will suffer nothing that is good to thrive near them ; though a man be never so well disposed, if his thoughts are distracted and perplexed about worldly affairs, it is impossible he should either be, or do good : this is the great argument which Christ himself useth against the cares of this life ; *No man, saith he, can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other, ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, and then adds, *therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life*, Matt. vi. 24, 25. implying, that so long as men do that, it is in vain to think of serving God, for no man's mind can possibly be intent upon two things so contrary to one another. And therefore he whose thoughts are taken up with getting, or keeping, or doing any thing of this world, may talk of religion, if he please, but he can never practise it : do what he can, his worldly cares will blunt his desires of doing good, so that he shall never do it ; and choak all the sense of God and goodness that was ever sown in his heart, at least so far that it shall never produce any fruit that is truly ripe and good.

AND so do riches also very often do of themselves, although a man hate them already, and so is not over-careful about them ; for they are very deceitful, they cheat and seduce men into such a conceit of this world, as damps all their endeavours after a better. We have a sad instance of this in the young-man, who had very fair for heaven, when he came to Christ to know the way thither, and told him, that he had kept the commandments from his youth ; but when Christ said, he must *sell all and give to the poor, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions*, Matt. xix. 22. he had great possessions, and he would not part with them for it, how great a mind soever he had to go to heaven ; and so they were plainly the thorns which choaked all the good seed that had been sown in his heart.

THE same may be said of the pleasures of this life, or, as St. Mark calls them, the lusts or desires of other things besides riches : for not only such carnal and sensual pleasures as are in themselves sinful, but all love, desire and delight in any thing upon earth, if it be once immoderate and excessive, it turns a man's mind upside down, it hinders his growth in grace, it choaks the word whensoever he hears it, and he also becomes unfruitful.

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THESE are the three sorts of hearers, which are only hearers. We come now to those who are not *hearers only*, but *doers of the word*: these are thus represented to us in the parable; *but other seed fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold*, Matt. xiii. 8. the meaning of which is thus explain'd in St. Matthew; *but he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty*, ver. 23. and to the same purpose in St. Luke; *but that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience*, Luke viii. 15. where we may observe in general, that of the three unprofitable hearers, the first heard the word, but did not mind it; the second minded it for a while, but did not keep it; the third kept it, but did no good with it: but these fruitful hearers do all that those did, and more, they hear so as to mind it, they mind it so as to keep it, and they keep it so as to use and improve it, to God's glory and their own good. And the reason is, because these do not receive the seed of God's word as the first did, *by the way-side*; nor as the second, *upon a rock*, or stony heart; nor as the third, *among thorns*; but they receive it with an *honest and good heart*, the proper soil for good works to grow in.

First, THEY hear *with an honest and good heart*; they do not come to church only out of custom, to please their friends, or to be thought religious; neither do they come to sleep, and pass away their time to no purpose; much less do they come to catch up something to throw at the preacher: but they come with an honest and good design, to hear God's word, to know his pleasure, to understand what he would have them believe and do, that they may obtain and continue in his favour; how they may serve and honour him in this world, so as to see and enjoy him in the next. And therefore, all the while they hear the word, they keep their minds intent upon it, and their hearts open ready to receive it, *not as the word of men, but (as it is, in truth,) the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. and that it may do so in them, they mix it with a quick and lively faith, believing it, though it be never so much above their understanding, as firmly as if it was within the compass of it. They regard not, whether what is taught them be high or low, nor whether what is required of them be hard or easy, that is all one to them, it is the word of God, and they are resolved to frame their faith and manners according to it: to believe what he hath said, to avoid what he hath forbidden, to perform what he hath commanded, to fear what he hath threatned, and to trust on what he hath promised, whatsoever come of it. For which purpose they do not pick and chuse, take one thing and slip another, but they take all together, as much as ever they can, and that too, not only in their minds and memories, but into their very hearts and souls, all their affections being moved suitably to what they hear. By which means the word of God is quite another thing to them, than it is to other people. Other people only hear it sounding in their ears, these feel it working in their hearts and taking root there.

HENCE, in the next place, these, as they hear, so they keep and retain the word in an *honest and good heart*; they set a guard about it, that nothing may come near to hurt it: they lay it up in the bottom of their hearts, where the fowls of the air, the devil, can never reach it. The seed is sown in a soft and deep soil, where it hath liberty and room enough to spread its root, and to cover it, so that no heat can scorch it: and when it puts forth the blades, there are no thorns to choak it; for there is no such thing as worldly care in an honest and good heart; for that is got above this world, and therefore cannot be disturbed or perplexed with any thing that is in it. And hence it is, that the word these hear, abides by them; it is engrafted into them, as the apostle speaks, *1 Jam. i. 21.* and so diffuseth its virtue and energy all over them, influencing all powers and faculties of their souls, so as to put them upon constant and sincere endeavours to do all the good works which God hath set them. Like good seed, which being sown in a good soil, always brings forth good fruit, *first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*, as Christ himself speaks upon another occasion, *Mark iv. 28.* and this too, not in any small proportion, like bad seed in a barren ground, but *some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty*; which is the last thing to be considered.

AND here we may take notice, that all who hear the word of God with an honest and good heart, bring forth fruit; fruit, like the heart from whence it springs, honest and good: they all are duly affected with what they hear, they all strive to live answerable to it; they all improve it as well as they can; but not all alike, or in the same measure; for some have more strength and greater opportunities than others: and therefore, some bring forth more fruit, others less, but still all, some. And it is to be observed, that as our Lord here describes three sorts of fruitless hearers, so he divides those who bear fruit also into three ranks: whereof the first bears an *hundred fold*; the second, *sixty*; and the last *thirty fold*.

A *N hundred fold*, I confess, is extraordinary; it is but seldom that so much is brought forth by one seed, but sometimes it is: so, though it be but seldom, yet sometimes the word of God hath extraordinary success in those who hear it, with honest and good hearts, raising them above the ordinary pitch of good men, and enabling them to do such good works as are extraordinary, either for number, or quality, or both. Such was the effect which Christ's word had upon St. Paul, when of a persecutor it made him an indefatigable preacher of the gospel, and afterwards a martyr for it. There have been some such extraordinary christians in most ages, made so by the extraordinary power of Christ's word upon them, whereby, though they have not arrived at the state of perfection, yet they have come so near it, as to live continually above this world, to exercise themselves in all manner of good works, to devote their lives wholly to God's service, and at last lay them down for his sake. This is extraordinary, and therefore may well be meant by the seeds increasing to *an hundred fold*.

THE next producing *sixty fold*: this also is a very great increase, but much more common than the other. Of this middle rank, are all they who so hear and receive the word as to become strong in faith, zealous of good works, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord with a perfect heart, and a willing mind, continuing instant in prayer, fleeing from all appearance of evil, and catching at all opportunities they can get of doing good, and so shining as lights in the world; who, though they have not the honour which the first had, to sacrifice their lives as a testimony to the truth, and for the glory of God, yet they sacrifice both all their sins and all they have to his honour: they rejoyce if they be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name; they take joyfully the spoiling of their goods; they count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, they can cheerfully suffer the loss of all things, and *count them but dung that they may win Christ*; and have good ground to hope, that if there be occasion, they shall be willing and ready to die too for his sake, who died for theirs. There always have been, and I do not question but there still are many such eminent christians in the world, eminent for their piety, for their justice, for their humility, for their temperance, for their modesty, for their meekness, for their charity, for all sorts of virtues, and for all manner of good works whatsoever. And they are all made so by the mighty power of God's word upon their hearts; which may therefore be truly said to bring forth *sixty fold*.

THE last and lowest rank of fruitful seed, is that which bringeth forth only *thirty fold*; which though it be but half the former, is a very good increase: of this sort are those which the apostle calls, *weak in the faith*, Rom. xiv. 1. and *babes in Christ*, who are to be *fed with milk, and not with meat*, 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2. they are born again, not of corruptible, but incorruptible seed, by the word of God, but they are, *νεόγυτοι*, newly sprung up from that seed, and therefore, *as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. i. 2. 1. cap. ii. 2. being in the number of those who have need of milk, and not of strong-meat: *strong-meat belonging to those who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*, Heb. v. 12, 14. which these have not as yet; but they desire it heartily, and endeavour after it all they can: they labour day and night to mortify all their sins, and never leave till they have done it effectually: they strive continually against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and though they cannot as yet overcome them, at least they keep themselves from being overcome by them: they make it their constant care and study to *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*; and if they happen to stumble, they immediately get up again, and walk more carefully ever after: they are not as yet come to a *perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, Eph. iv. 13. *but they grow every day in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. and therefore, although they have not attained to the first or second rank,

so as to produce *an hundred or sixty fold*, yet they also hearing and keeping the word in an honest and good heart, cannot but bring forth *thirty fold* at least.

HAVING thus gone through both the parable and the meaning of it, I come now to apply it to you who are here present, to all of you; for there is not a man or woman, as I observed, in the whole congregation, but who is particularly concerned in one part or other of it. I shall first speak to the unfruitful, and then to the fruitful hearers of God's word, and to both in the same order as they are described and set down in the parable.

To begin therefore with the lowest and worst sort of hearers, who hear the word of God, but do not mind it. What do you come to church for? it either is the word of God ye hear, or it is not: if it be not, why do ye come to hear it? if it be, why do not ye mind it? Do ye think that almighty God will suffer his word to be slighted by his own creatures, without inflicting some severe punishment upon you for it? no, *be not deceived, God will not be mocked*: if ye will not mind what he saith unto you now, he'll, ere long, make ye do it whether ye will or no, when he shall pronounce all the curses upon you, which are written in that very word, which ye now despise and take no notice of.

AND as for such who do not only hear the word, but are really affected with it, so as to set upon the practice of it for some time, till meeting with difficulties, and troubles in it, like seed scorched with the sun, they wither and fall away into their former course of life: to such I shall only say, and yet not I, but the Lord, in the words of his apostle, *if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and saviour Jesus Christ, they are again intangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire*, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22.

BUT there are many who do not only hear and mind the word, but continue to do so for a great while together, perhaps all their life long, and yet are never the better for it, their hearts being all along overspread with the perplexing cares of this life, which, like so many thorns, choak the word, and make it unfruitful: these hear only to hear, and mind only to know, not to do their duty. But I would desire such to consider what St. Paul saith, *for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified*, Rom. ii. 13. and what St. James adviseth, *be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*, Jam. i. 22. for so certainly they do; they do but deceive themselves, who think they are ever the better for hearing God's word, unless they become better by it, so as to do what they hear. Hear what Christ himself saith, *if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*, John xiii. 17. if ye do them, not if ye only know them; for knowing without doing is so far from making you happy, that it will but make you more miserable: ye may be confident of it, for Christ himself saith, *that the servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*, Luke xii. 47.

GOD grant that this be not the case of any who hear me at this time, but that ye may all be in the number of the last sort of hearers in the parable, who practis'd what they heard, and brought forth fruit with patience. I hope there are some such among you; and therefore I have a few things to say to them: whatsoever influence the word of God hath had upon your minds, give him the praise and honour of it; for though Paul himself planted, and Apollo watered, it was God that gave the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6. and as a testimony of your gratitude for it, acknowledge it to be the greatest blessing you ever did or can receive on this side heaven, far greater than if he had given you all the crowns and scepters upon earth, which, put altogether, are not comparable to one grain of true grace and virtue: and therefore how little soever it be, prize it as your greatest treasure, for it is the pearl of great price.

BUT, howsoever, do not content yourselves with the least quantity of it, but strive all ye can to increase and multiply it. If the good seed which was sown in your hearts, hath hitherto brought forth but *thirty fold*, from this time forward let it bring forth *sixty*, and, if possible, *an hundred fold*. Do as St. Paul did, *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus*,

Jesus, Phil. iii. 13, 14. as ye have hitherto walked so as to please God, now abound more and more : as considering that the more service ye do for God upon earth, the greater shall be the reward that he will give you in heaven ; as Christ himself assures you in the parable of the nobleman, who gave to each of his servants one pound ; that servant who made no use of his pound, had it taken from him ; he that had gain'd five pounds with it, was made ruler over five cities ; and he who had gain'd ten, was made ruler over ten cities, Luke xix. And so proportionably, the more good works the seed that is sown in your hearts produceth, the greater will be your crop of glory : wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

S E R M O N CXXV.

The Blessing of Purity in Heart.

M A T T. V. 8.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

G O D, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son ; who being himself also truly God as well as man, whatsoever he spoke was spoken by God himself : and all his sayings were so many oracles, or divine truths, uttered immediately by divinity and truth itself ; which therefore ought to be hearkened to, received and believed by us, with the greatest attention, the profoundest reverence, and the strongest faith, that our minds are capable of : insomuch that whatsoever we read or hear of any thing that Christ said, we ought not to doubt in the least of the truth or certainty of it, but conclude it impossible it should be otherwise than just as he said it ; who being of infinite wisdom, cannot be deceived himself ; and being of infinite goodness, cannot deceive us ; or, as the apostle words it, *who cannot lie* ; every falshood being a contradiction to his very essence, which is justice, truth, and faithfulness itself.

AND as all Christ's sayings were thus infallibly true and certain, so were they likewise of infinite weight and moment, and necessary to be known, believed and observed by all that either heard them, or shall ever hear of them. For as he did not shed his blood, so neither did he ever spend his breath, in vain. He never spake, as we are apt to do, at random, and to no purpose ; but every word that came from his sacred mouth, was sacred as himself, apposite to the purpose, pertinent to the occasion, and of constant and perpetual use to those for whose sake he spake it : so that as whatsoever he suffered was for the expiation of our sins, and whatsoever he did, was for the confirmation of our faith, so what-

whatsoever he said was some way or other for the edification and salvation of our souls : and therefore, we who hope to be saved by him, should take special notice of every thing which he said, as being confident it was for our sakes he said it, that we might thereby know what to believe and do, that we may be saved by him ; especially considering that this was the great reason wherefore his divine sayings are so infallibly recorded, and so faithfully transmitted to us, that we might receive the same benefit and comfort from them, as they did who heard them from his own mouth ; which, notwithstanding we can never do, unless we duly weigh, consider and observe them with that care and diligence, as becometh those who believe them to be the words of the greatest person, the best friend, and the only saviour they have in the whole world.

THIS I thought good to premise concerning Christ's words in general, the better to dispose and prepare your minds for those impressions, which this divine sentence of his, that I have now read, will make upon them, if you do but consider whose it is, and with how much majesty and authority he pronounced it : for certainly his manner of speaking was every whit as divine as the matter he spake. So that all they who were so near him as to hear him speak, justly *bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*, Luke iv. 22. yea, the very officers that were sent to take him, when they had once heard him, were themselves so taken with him, that they could not but confess, that *never man spake like this man*, Joh. vii. 46. and had we stood by him at the same time, we doubtless should have been of the same mind too, catching at every word that dropt from him, and admiring at his way of speaking it, as well as the profound sense, that appeared in it. And then how flat and insipid would all the discourses of the greatest philosophers have seemed to us, in comparison of his.

AND what though we never heard him speak ? yet nevertheless we ought to be as much affected with what he said, as they that did so ; forasmuch as we have his divine discourses and sayings exactly related to us, both by them who heard them from his own mouth, and by the same spirit wherewith he spake them. The only thing that may seem wanting to us, is his delivery, or the grave, majestic, and divine way of demeaning himself, and pronouncing his words when he spake : but this defect also may and ought to be supplied by a quick and lively faith, which, as it is the evidence of things not seen, so it represents to us words not heard now, in the same way and manner wherein they were first spoken.

As we therefore believe that Christ himself spake these words, let us, by the assistance of the same faith, conceive in our minds how he spake them : and for that purpose, let us apprehend the infinite, almighty, alwise, and eternal God, in the nature and likeness of man, sitting upon a mountain, with a great company of people about him, and then on a sudden opening his sacred mouth, that all might hear him, uttering these divine sentences:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God, &c.

DIVINE sentences indeed ! Methinks I see the rays of divinity shining in every one of them, and in the very voice too, wherewith he pronounced them. Methinks I feel its power and authority working in my breast, and bearing down all before it : and we could not certainly but all do so, if we did but rightly consider and firmly believe, that these words were spoken by Christ, by God himself : and therefore must needs be spoken in the best manner that any tongue could speak them. But howsoever, that they may be sure to have their due effect upon us, let us single out one of these divine sentences, from whence to take our measures of all the rest : and that shall be the last before rehearsed, *blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

A SENTENCE as full of divine instruction, advice and comfort, as so few words can hold ; insomuch, that did we but rightly understand all that our Lord meant by it, it would serve us instead of a whole body of practical divinity : and altho' that may seem, at first sight, to be something difficult to our weak capacities, yet

we need not be discouraged from searching after it, seeing he himself is always ready to assist us with the same spirit, by which he spake, in finding out the meaning of whatsoever he said; in the humble confidence of which assistance we shall therefore briefly consider, whom he means by the *pure in heart*, what by *seeing God*, how they who are pure in heart shall do it, and how great a blessedness that is to them.

By the heart, therefore, we are here to understand the inward and spiritual part of man, his mind or soul, that whereby he thinks, apprehends, judges, and discerns between truth and falsehood, good and evil, right or wrong, and generally between one thing and another, and accordingly consents or dissents, chuseth or refuseth, loves or hates, desireth or abhorreth, or is any way affected towards what is presented to him; for so the holy spirit, whereby Christ spake all along in scripture, useth the word heart for all the powers and faculties of the rational soul, the understanding, will, affections, memory and conscience; or, in general, for the spirit of a man, the fountain and principal of all human actions, as such: and therefore our saviour elsewhere saith, that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things*, Mat. xii. 34, 35. that is, all a man's words and works are such as his heart is, from whence they flow.

MOREOVER, those things you know are said to be pure, which are just such as they were made and designed to be, without having any thing mixed or incorporated with them, which doth not belong to their own proper nature, wherefore the *Greeks* usually explain, *καθαρός*, pure, by *ἀκραιος*, and *ἀμιγής*, unmixed. Thus gold is said to be pure, when there is no dross, nor any alloy of other metals in it; hony is said to be sincere and pure, when it is *sine cerâ*, without wax or other recrements; water is said to be pure when there is no earth, nor other elements in it, nothing but water itself: for whatsoever is heterogeneous, or of another nature, being mixed with a thing, alters the nature of that thing, by communicating something of its own to it, by which means it ceaseth to be purely and entirely the thing itself, and therefore it is truly said to be impure and unclean, because corrupted or polluted by something that should not be there.

Now these things being put together, we may easily discover, who may be truly said to be *pure in heart*, even those whose heart or spirit, is all heart, all spirit, having nothing in it, but what is proper and essential to it, without the mixture of any thing contrary or disagreeable to the natural temper and constitution of a spirit united to an human body, and informing of it, so as to make up one human person with it: for otherwise, it is not purely or wholly the same it should be, there being something in it which should not be there. But the spirit of man, we know, is made in the likeness of God, exactly conformable, as to his nature, so to his law: and so long as it continues such, it is a pure spirit, a pure heart: but if it acteth any thing contrary to the law of God, it acteth contrary to its own nature, and offers that violence to it which cannot but make some alteration in it. But the soul being of itself perfectly good, there can be no alteration made in it, but what must needs be for the worse. Hence therefore every sin or transgression of God's law, leaves a *macula*, a spot or blot upon the soul, which stains and sullies it, and so far as that goes, it makes it impure, and different from what God made it; as may be easily seen in every actual sin that a man committeth, much more in habitual sins: for when actual sins are so often multiplied, that they grow up into habits, they destroy and over-run the natural constitution of the soul, by superinducing another and contrary nature into it, whereby it becomes as much avers'd from good, and inclin'd to evil, as it is, in its own proper nature, averse from evil and inclin'd to good.

To make this more plain, I might instance in all, especially habitual, customary, or reigning sins, and shew how they spoil, and corrupt and defile the soul, altering its very frame and temper; which some so plainly do, that they are truly called uncleanness itself: and so may all other sins as well as they. And therefore, together with them, our blessed saviour himself reckons up, *evil thoughts, murders, thefts, false-witness and blasphemies, which proceeding from the heart, defile the man*, Matt. xv. 19, 20. because they defile the principal part of him, his heart or spirit, from whence they proceed. Where we may observe, that not only the more brutish

tish sins which are committed by the body, but such also as are acted wholly in the heart or mind itself, and go no further, do nevertheless corrupt and defile it, even evil thoughts themselves: as for example, heretical and erroneous thoughts darken the heart or mind that it cannot see: doubtful and unbelieving thoughts shut it up, so that it cannot receive the truth in the love of it: proud and ambitious thoughts swell the heart beyond its due proportion: covetous and earthly thoughts shrink it up into so narrow a compass, that it can reach no further, than to the little inconsiderable things of this world: envious, malicious and revengeful thoughts fire the heart, and put it into a raging flame and fury: fearful, despairing, and mistrustful thoughts, chill it, and make it so cold, stupid and unactive, that it cannot exert itself, nor employ its powers and faculties as it ought to do: vain, foolish and impertinent thoughts weaken and debase the mind, by making it spend itself to no purpose: lustful and unclean thoughts ensnare the soul, and subje& it wholly to the petulant and unruly humours of the body: profane atheistical thoughts harden the heart, and make it callous and insensible of any difference between good and evil: but repining, discontented, and jealous thoughts fret and gall it, and puts it into such a ferment, that it is always restless and uneasy.

THUS we might easily shew, how all manner of evil and irregular thoughts, that are conceived in the heart, although they are never brought forth into act, do notwithstanding corrupt and pollute the heart, in which they are conceived: as we may see also in the apostate angels, which though they be altogether spiritual creatures, without any body or matter to work upon, yet, by reason of the proud, malicious, and other wicked thoughts that were always rising in them, they are all along in the gospel called, *Ἀνάδραττα πνεύματα*, *impure, unclean spirits*: but, as *Job* speaks, *the very heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?* *Job* xv. 15, 16, i. e. who is as prone to sin, as he is to drink when he is a-dry; and doth not only conceive it in his soul, but commits it also with his body. As his mind and conscience is defiled, so is his life and actions: and therefore he is his all over, or, as the psalmist words it, *altogether become filthy*, *Psal.* xiv. 3.

HENCE therefore, in order to the making of our hearts pure, the first thing necessary is, that they be purged and cleansed from all the guilt and filth they have contracted, by sinning against God; for till that be done, the spirits of fallen men are as impure and unclean in the sight of God, as the fallen angels themselves. And hence it is that *David* prays so earnestly to be cleansed from his *secret faults*, *Psal.* xix. 12. and when he had defiled himself with sin, he was so vile and loathsome in his own eyes, that he could not endure himself, but begs of God to be cleansed of it, saying, *wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow*, *Psal.* li. 2, 7. And we may all pray the same prayer, as he did, with full assurance of faith, that upon our hearty and sincere repentance God will hear us, in that he hath expressly promised to do it for all who are truly penitent, saying, *I will cleanse them from all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me*, *Jerem.* xxxiii. 8. and elsewhere, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you*, *Ezek.* xxxvi. 25. When a man's heart is thus cleansed from the sins where-with it was before polluted, then it is rightly prepared for that purity which our Lord here speaks of; for then it ceases to be an impure and unclean heart. But it cannot properly be said to be pure, until it be restored to the same temper and disposition which it was at first made of: and therefore *David*, in the place before quoted, as he prays that God would cleanse him from his sins, so likewise, that he would create in him a *clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him*; that is, that he would make his heart such a one as it was at first created, and renew his spirit, so as to make it sound and right again, fixed wholly upon God, and set to obey his commandments, as heartily and sincerely as if it never had been corrupted; for hypocrisy and dissimulation destroy and spoil the heart as much as any sin whatsoever. And therefore *St. James* saith, *cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded*, *Jam.* iv. 8. implying, that they who are hypocritical and double-minded, have as much need to purify their hearts as the greatest sinners in the world: and the reason is, because their hearts are divided between God and the world, between virtue and vice: and, by consequence,

consequence, are far from being pure; for a pure heart is always single, and all of a piece, wholly and entirely inclin'd to God and goodness.

AND it is such an heart as this, which our Lord here means; an heart that is not only inclined to God, but to him only, and to nothing else but in obedience or subordination to him; an heart that really loves God above all things else, and all other things only for his sake; an heart that is always flaming up to heaven in ardent and fervent desires to please and honour God in time, and to enjoy him for ever; an heart that sanctifies the Lord of hosts himself, making him its only fear, and its only dread; an heart that is never afraid of evil-tidings, but is always fixed, trusting in the Lord; an heart that is continually rejoycing in God, whether it hath or hath not any thing else to rejoyce in; an heart that prefers the least duty, before the greatest gain, and the greatest suffering before the least sin; an heart that is never shaken either with hopes or fears, but remains stedfast and immoveable as a rock, whether the sun shine, or tempest beat upon it; an heart that is sound in the faith, submissive to the will, obedient to the law, constant in the service, and zealous for the glory of God; but meek, and humble, and kind, and gentle, and true, and just, and charitable towards others: in short, an heart that exerciseth itself to have *always a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men.*

THIS is a pure heart indeed! but how can we ever make our unclean and sinful hearts thus pure and holy? for, as the wise man observes, *who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?* Prov. xx. 9. it is true, we can never do it by our own strength: but, blessed be God, he hath found out a way whereby we may all do it if we will, even by the merits and assistance of his son our saviour Jesus Christ, *who, as St. John saith, hath washed us from our sins in his own blood,* Rev. i. 5. *which, as the same apostle elsewhere observeth, cleanseth us from all iniquity.* So that if we do but *confess our sins, God, for his sake, is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,* 1 John. i. 7, 9. and as Christ thus gave himself for us, that he might *redeem us from all iniquity,* so likewise that he might *purify us to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works,* Tit. ii. 14. and that he might *sanctify and cleanse his church with the washing of water by the word, that he might present to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish,* Eph. v. 26, 27. where we may observe, not only that this was the great end wherefore Christ gave himself for us, that he might make us pure and holy, but likewise how he doth it, even by his word; as he himself also acquaints his disciples, where he saith to them, *now are ye clean through the word that I have spoken unto you,* John xv. 3. and the reason is, because that by the ministry of his word, God is pleased to convey into us his pure and holy spirit, which, by degrees, makes our spirits, according to their capacities, like itself, holy and pure, enlightening our minds, informing our judgments, rectifying our wills, regulating our affections, directing our consciences, and so reducing all the powers and faculties of our souls into their proper frame and temper again. Hence St. Peter, speaking to all true christians, saith, *seeing you have purified your souls, in obeying the truth through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently,* 1 Pet. i. 22. where, as he supposeth that they had pure hearts, so he shews how they came by them, even by the spirit bestowed upon them, in hearing and obeying the truth revealed in the gospel of Christ, whose spirit it is, and who always gives it to those who truly believe in him; for they are all real members of that body whereof he is head, and therefore must needs be acted by the same spirit that is in him. And hence it is, that Christ is said to *dwell in our hearts by faith,* Eph. iii. 17. because his spirit doth so. Hence also it is, that St. Peter saith, that God *purifies our hearts by faith,* Acts xv. 9. and Christ himself saith, that we are *sanctified by faith that is in him,* Acts xxvi. 18. because upon our believing in him, he diffuseth that measure of his grace and holy spirit into us, whereby our hearts are purified and made holy.

AND this certainly is the only way whereby it is possible for our hearts ever to be made pure; for though our human nature in general was purified by being united to the divine person, our human persons in particular can never be purified, but by partaking of the divine nature; which we can never do any other way, but only by believing and trusting in that divine person to which our nature is united, even Christ Jesus. But if we do that as we ought, he will make us partakers

takers of his divine nature, by giving us that divine spirit which proceeds from him, and is of the same divine nature with himself, and therefore is able to make us so too. Neither is he less willing than able to do it; for being sent by Christ, he presently exerts his divine power and grace upon our hearts, making them as sincerely pure and holy, as the heart of lapsed creatures can be made. And what is still wanting in them to make them perfectly pure, Christ himself supplies by his own all-sufficient merits. So that by this means we may all become such as our saviour here calls *pure in heart*, and, by consequence, so blessed as to see God.

BUT see God! who can do that? Doth not St. John say, that *no man hath seen God at any time*? John i. 18. 1 John iv. 12. doth not St. Paul say, that *God dwelleth in that light which no mortal eye can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see*? 1 Tim. vi. 16. doth not God himself say to Moses, *thou canst not see my face: for there is no man shall see me and live*? Exod. xxxiii. 20. It is true, no man ever did or can see God at all with his bodily eye, nor perfectly with the eye of his soul, so long as it is in this mortal body. But it is as true also what the same St. Paul saith, that we shall hereafter see him *face to face*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. and what the same St. John saith, that *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. but then he adds, that *every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure*, ver. 3. whereas he proves that we shall be like God, because we shall see him, which none can do who is not like him, so he shews wherein we must be like God, that we may see him, even in being *pure as he is pure*: according to what our saviour himself here saith, that *the pure in heart shall see God*.

BUT what it is to see God, and how the *pure in heart* shall do it? are questions not so easily to be determined. Howsoever, by the assistance of God, I shall offer at something towards it: not that I think it possible for me to express myself about it, so as that all should understand my meaning; for it is plain, that none can rightly apprehend what it is to see God, but they who do see him, or at least have done it. And it is as plain, that none ever did or can see him, but only they who are *pure in heart*; to whom our Lord himself here appropriates this great blessedness, and so excludes all others from it. And, by consequence, after all that can be said concerning it, they whose minds are infected with heresy, corrupted with vice, or destitute of true grace and virtue, will still be in the dark about it, hearing only a sound of words in their ears, but knowing nothing of what they mean, no more than a man that is born blind understands a discourse of colours, and the difference between one and another; who, whatsoever, is said about them, he having never seen any such thing, cannot possibly frame any idea of them in his mind. This the apostle long ago observed, saying, *that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. that is, he who is still in his natural unregenerate estate, no better than he was first born, or perhaps much worse, such a one is not capable of spiritual things, he cannot receive them in the love of them, for they do not seem to him, as they are in themselves, the height of wisdom, but meer foolishness and babling, (as the great *Athenian* philosophers esteem'd them, *Acts* xvii. 18.) neither can he know them, or have any clear or right apprehensions of them, because they being purely spiritual, can be discern'd only in a spiritual manner, which he being altogether carnal and sensual, is not qualified for. And if impure and corrupt minds are not able to discern any thing at all that is purely spiritual, much less can they see him that is spirit and purity itself.

WHEN I seriously consider this, I cannot wonder there are any in the world who deny or doubt of God's existence, I rather wonder there are not more; for seeing all men are born and live in sin, and so have their foolish hearts darkened, not only by their original, but likewise by many actual transgressions, it is very much that there are so few but who have some sense and notions of a deity: and they who have not, must ascribe it wholly to the pravity and corruption of their nature, which makes them incapable of seeing him, who is purity and perfection itself: for this is that into which the Holy Ghost himself resolves the origin of all atheism; *the fool*, saith he, *hath said in his heart, there is no God*; and then gives this as the reason of it, *corrupt are they, and have done abominable works; there is none that doth good. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy*, Psal. xiv. 1, 3. they are altogether become filthy, that's

the reason that they are so far from seeing God, that they cannot see so much as that there is a God, and therefore say, at least in their corrupt and filthy hearts, there is none.

BUT what if there be here and there a man so stark-blind, that he cannot see the sun shining at noon-day, may we thence conclude, that there is no such thing as a sun in the firmament, or that it never shines? or that all the rest of mankind are mistaken, who see both it, and all things else by it, every day? The case is the same here; there may, perhaps, be some few persons upon earth, who by giving way to their unruly passions, by their frequent debaucheries, and all sorts of lewd practises, have so corrupted and vitiated their minds, that they cannot discern that pure and all-glorious light, which we call God, but altho' it shines continually so as to dazle the eyes of all others about them, yet they notwithstanding are still in the dark, living as without God in the world. But because such men cannot see God, doth it thence follow that there is none to see? or that no other people can see him, because they do not: no surely, though all mankind be very much depraved and out of tune, there are very few but who have so much sense left them, as still to perceive that God is. This all men do by the very light of nature, except those few who have quite extinguish'd it, and so are monsters rather than men: but none can rightly conceive and apprehend what God is, but only they whose hearts are purged and freed from that filth and corruption that hinders their sight of him, and are restored to their primitive holiness and purity, *without which, as the apostle saith, no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14.* but that the pure in heart shall see God, God himself here positively asserteth with his own mouth.

THEY shall see God, that is, they shall see *Jehovah*, the Lord of hosts, the being of all beings, the cause of all causes, the best of all goods, the principal of all motion, the fountain of all light, the center of all happiness, the perfection of all perfections. They shall see God, the sole creator, the continual preserver, the universal governour of the world, who made all things by the power of his word, who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, and who orders all things according to his own good will and pleasure. They shall see him, before whom *the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing: him before whom all nations are as nothing, and are accounted as less than nothing and vanity: him who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, who stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in, Isa. xl. 15, 17, 22.* they shall see him, whose name is *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* They shall see him who is *Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the almighty, Apoc. i. 8.* They shall see him, whose very essence is wisdom, and knowledge, and power, and justice, and love, and mercy, and goodness, and truth, and majesty, and eternity, and glory, and all perfections together. In short, they shall see him by whom alone they see, in whom alone they live, and move, and have their being.

THIS is that God, whom the pure in heart shall see both in this world, and that which is to come: even in this world, they see God, with the eye, not of their bodies, but minds, by having right and clear apprehensions of him, and a quick and lively faith in him, which, as the apostle saith, *is the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1.* and by which *Moses* is therefore said, to have seen him that is *invisible, Heb. xi. 27.* and so do all that are pure in heart see God, by the same faith whereby their hearts are made pure; for by it they are as fully assured of whatsoever is revealed concerning God in scripture, as if they saw it before their eyes: as sensible of his divine nature and properties, as they are of their own weakness and imperfections: and as certain that he is, as that they themselves are, and that he is every where as certainly as they are any where: so that the same faith which purifies their hearts, possesseth them likewise with as deep a sense, and as clear a sight of God, as they can possibly have of any thing in the world besides: much more when, being fixed on Christ, it is excited and actuated by that holy spirit, which flows from him into the hearts of all true believers; who by this means see God by himself, by the assistance of his own spirit, which *searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God, 1 Cor. ii. 10.* and revealeth them to those who love

love him with a pure heart, according to that remarkable promise of God our saviour, saying, *he that loveth me, shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto you*, John xiv. 21. and they to whom God is pleased to manifest himself must needs see him; and they must needs see him also the same way whereby he is pleased to manifest himself, even by his holy spirit, and, by consequence, as clearly as we see the sun by its own light. Hence, *David*, speaking unto God, saith, *in thy light we shall see light*, Psal. xxxvi. 9. implying, that we see God who is light itself, by that light which proceeds from himself, even by his own spirit, enlightening our minds at the same time that he purifies our hearts: and so giving us as full a sight of God, as our nature at present is capable of.

By this means, therefore, they who are pure in heart see God: they see him in his holy word, wherein he reveals his will, and unveils himself and his perfections to them: they see him in his works, wherein he shineth forth in all his glory before them: they see his infinite wisdom, power and goodness in his creation, preservation and government of the world: they see his infinite justice in the condemnation of the fallen angels: they see his infinite justice and mercy both together in the redemption of fallen man: they see him, being in every thing that is, working in every thing that moves, and ordering every thing that happens in the world: they see him smiling upon all the glorified spirits in heaven, frowning upon the damned in hell, directing the courses of all the stars in the firmament, upholding, governing, and disposing of all the fowls in the air, all the fishes in the sea, and all the men, and beasts, and insects upon the land: they see him giving bounds to the waters, fruitfulness to the earth, and their respective virtues and qualities to all the herbs, and plants, and stones, and metals, and minerals that are in either: they see him in themselves, where-soever they are; they look upon him as present with them: whatsoever they have, they look upon him as bestowing it upon them; whatsoever they do, they look upon him as assisting them in it: above all, they see him in the purity of their own hearts; as *Gregory Nyssen* observes, saying, *that he who hath purged his heart from all corrupt affection, ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τῆς θεότητος φύσεως καθαρῶ ἐμὸν, seeth the image of the divine nature in his own beauty, or purity*, Greg. Nys. de Beatitud. Orat. 6. For the nature of God being purity itself, they who are pure in heart, are so far like to God; and *partakers of the divine nature*, as *St. Peter* speaks, 2 Pet. i. 4. and therefore, if they do but look into their own hearts, so much as they see of purity, so much they see of God himself there, whose image and likeness it is.

BUT, here we must observe, that the sight which such persons have of God, is not a bare simple intuition or very speculation, which is common to others as well as to them: for they that have a clear head, although their heart be impure, they may notwithstanding have high and excellent notions of God, and discourse elegantly of his divine nature and properties, his word and works, and how we may see him, and his glory in them, and yet all this while, have no sense at all of what they speak upon their own hearts; for such notions only swim in the brain, and flow from thence into the tongue: they never come near the heart, nor affect that at all, by reason of its impurity and hardness, which makes it insensible of every thing that is truly good and pure, howsoever it may be set off and adorned: and in them is verified that of the prophet, that *seeing they shall see and shall not perceive*, Isa. vi. 9. Matt. xiii. 14. and the reason he gives is, because their hearts are waxed gross and fat, stuffed up with so much filth, that they have no seeing in them, nor relish what they see, any more than as if they did not see it at all.

BUT it is not so with the *pure in heart*; they see God in their heart as well as in their heads. At the same time, they see, they likewise taste that the lord is good and gracious, as the Holy Ghost himself speaks, Psal. xxxiv. 8. 1 Pet. ii. 3. for their hearts being pure, and so like to God, every glance of him goes to the very bottom of them, and overspreads them with such a sense of his glory and goodness, as moves and inclines all the powers and faculties of their souls towards him. This I do not question but many here present have found by their own experience, who, when they have been thinking upon God, have felt themselves struck, as it were; with an holy admiration of him, and their hearts all in a flame with love, desire and joy, and a great deal more than I am able to express, or they themselves either. So that they seem to see God, not only with the

eye of their reason, or understanding, but with their whole hearts, and their whole souls, all their faculties being equally affected, one as well as another; at least so far as they are clean and pure, but no farther: and that's the reason why this sight of God is rare in any, and so imperfect in the best that are upon earth, because there are so few that are sincerely pure, and none that are perfectly so, while they are in the body. But when we come to heaven, where our souls shall be made the spirits of *just men made perfect*, there we shall see God perfectly, and so be perfectly filled with all manner of joy and satisfaction in him, as much as our most pure and perfect souls can hold. And then we shall perfectly find, by our own experience, how true our Lord is in what he promises, as well as asserts, saying, *blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

FOR they shall see God! that's the reason which he himself here gives, why the pure in heart are blessed. Indeed, seeing he who is the fountain of all blessing, hath pronounced them to be so, we could not but acknowledge them to be blessed, although he had given us no other reason for it. Yet, howsoever he hath given us here such a reason for it, that we cannot but from thence conclude them to be blessed, although he had never pronounced them to be so: for all the real blessedness that we are capable of, consisteth in our enjoyment of him that made us, and who made us of such a temper, that we cannot possibly be happy in any thing but himself, and therefore hath made nothing to make us happy, intending himself alone and his perfections for the object of our felicity: but as we can never be happy but in the enjoyment of God, the chiefest and only good, so we can never enjoy him unless we see him; neither can we see him, but we shall enjoy him; for we enjoy him by our seeing of him; as we may plainly discover by our very senses. The palate enjoys what it tastes, the ear what it hears, the eye what it sees, and so of the rest. Neither can we enjoy any sensible objects any other way, but by our senses being severally affected by them. So here, God is the proper object of our souls; and therefore so much as we see, so much we must needs enjoy of him: our whole souls, as I observed before, being affected with that blessed sight. From whence it necessarily follows, that the pure in heart must needs be blessed, in that they see God. And so far as they see God, so far they are blessed, even in this life.

THEY are blessed in all places, for they see God still present with them, upholding them in their being, supplying their wants, and protecting them from danger and mischief: they are blessed in all their enjoyments; for they see God both giving, and continuing, and sanctifying them all unto them: they are blessed in all their religious duties, for they see God exciting them to them, assisting of them, and declaring himself as well-pleased with them, and accepting of them for Christ Jesus's sake: they are blessed in all their civil actions, for they see God ordering their thoughts, directing their intentions, strengthening their resolutions, and co-operating all along in their performance of them: they are blessed in all conditions, for they see God managing the chain of all inferior causes, so as to make them all work together for their good: they see him winding and turning every thing that happens to them, till at last it turn to their real profit and advantage; and therefore, whatsoever their condition be, they are not only satisfied but well-pleased with it, as seeing it to be the best they could be in at that time: they may meet with troubles and crosses in the world, as other men do, but they are not so to them; for they see to both ends of them, from whence they come, and whether they tend, and therefore are never troubled or disturbed at them; but in the midst of all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they are still the same; for as they always see God, they always trust on him, and rejoyce in him, and strive all they can to please him, and to approve themselves unto him. And so long as they can do that, whatsoever storms or tempests may be without, they have still tranquillity and peace within: and how great a blessedness that is, none can tell but they that have it, even they who being pure in heart, always see God: they have it in a great measure upon earth, and when they come to heaven, they will have it in its utmost extremity and perfection; for there, as their hearts will be perfectly pure, they will see God perfectly, and so be perfectly blessed for ever.

AND as all the pure in heart will be thus blessed, so none but they can be so, as David also intimates, saying, *who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? he that hath clean hands and a pure heart*, Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. Heaven is an high and holy place, where the air is so thin and pure, that no foul

or impure creatures can live, much less enjoy any pleasure in it : they cannot get thither if they would, and if they were there, they would soon wish to be out again, as finding nothing to please and gratify their corrupt humours, nothing but what is contrary to their temper and inclinations : insomuch, that heaven would seem more like hell than heaven to them : the company that is there would seem irksome, the work tedious, and the very joys would be a trouble to them. But they need not fear that they shall ever be troubled with them ; for they, going out of this world with unclean hearts, will be immediately sent to a place and company that is more proper for them, even to live with unclean spirits in the region of darkness for ever.

WHEREFORE, as ever we desire *to be meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light*, we must be sure to depart out of this life with clean hands, and a pure heart, that so the air of that place may agree with us, and our minds may be duly qualified and disposed to taste and relish those pure and spiritual entertainments, which Christ hath purchased at no less a price than with his own blood, and is now providing for us, out of the inexhaustible treasure of his own infinite goodness and bounty, in the highest heavens, where we shall always live with him and see his glory, and continually admire, adore, magnify, and enjoy all those glorious, infinite, incomprehensible and eternal perfections, that are concentrated in his divine nature. And then we shall fully understand how blessed a thing it is to see God, and how the pure in heart shall do it for ever.

WHICH therefore that we may all do, let us make it our constant care and study to get and keep our hearts always clean and pure. And seeing we can never do it without the assistance of God's holy spirit, let us earnestly pray to God with *David*, that he would *create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us* : and with our church, that he would *cleave the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his holy spirit*. And seeing some hearts are like those unclean spirits, which, our saviour saith, *will not go out but by prayer and fasting*, let us often join fasting with our prayers ; that by keeping our bodies under we may be better able to keep our hearts free from all impure thoughts and desires, and in a right disposition to receive such illuminations and assistances of God's pure and holy spirit, as may make them also pure and holy. For which purpose, let us also frequently read and meditate upon God's holy word, and apply ourselves to Christ, in his holy sacrament, that together with his mystical body and blood we may, by faith, receive his spirit too. By the constant and sincere use of these means, and trusting upon God for his blessing upon them, through the assistance of his holy spirit moving in them, we may both get and keep our hearts pure, and so be as blessed as God himself can make us, for we shall see him : we may be confident of it, for we have Christ's own word for it, saying, *blessed are the pure in heart, &c.*



S E R M O N CXXVI.

Against rash Swearing.

M A T T. V. 34.

But I say unto you, swear not at all.

TH E S E words are much to be observed, as containing the will of our heavenly father, revealed to us, not by a prophet, or apostle, or any creature, but by his only begotten son, who came into the world on purpose to save us; and therefore, be sure, would require nothing of us, but what is necessary for our salvation: and being himself also truly God, of the same nature with the father, he could not but perfectly understand what was necessary, and what was the divine will and pleasure we should do, in order thereunto. For which reason, therefore, while he was upon earth, conversing with mankind in their own likeness, he took particular care to instruct them with his own mouth in their whole duty, what they ought to believe, and what they ought to do, that they may be saved by him. And having observed that the antient rabbins, or doctors and leaders of the *Jewish* church, had put false glosses and misinterpretations upon the moral law, and that the people taking the sense of it from them, had been led into great mistakes about it, which might hinder their obtaining that eternal salvation which he designed to purchase for them with his own blood; he therefore took all occasions of correcting those mistakes, and of acquainting them with the true sense and meaning of each commandment.

PARTICULARLY, whereas it is said in the third commandment, *thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*, Exod. xx. 7. and elsewhere, *ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of the Lord thy God*, Levit. xix. 12. and again, *if a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth*, Numb. xxx. 2. These, and such like laws concerning oaths and swearing, the antient rabbins had interpreted so, as if no more was meant by them, but only that men should do whatsoever they had sworn they would do. Again saith our saviour, *ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths*, Mat. iii. 33. which false interpretation of those divine laws, was of very ill consequence: for people having received this from their forefathers, as the full sense of them, they made no conscience of swearing in their common discourse, or of taking the name of God rashly and in vain: they regarded not what, or how, or how often they swore: if they did but perform what they had sworn, they thought themselves guilty of no fault, but that they had perfectly obeyed the law, and done all that was required in it.

—B U T our blessed Lord, who was himself the law-giver, teacheth them another lesson, saying, in the words of my text, *but I say unto you, swear not at all*; as if he had said, *I*, who made the law, and therefore must needs know the meaning of it better than you or your forefathers; *I*, who am wisdom itself, and therefore under-

understand the full extant and latitude of every precept; I, who am truth itself, and therefore neither will nor can deceive you; I, who am come into the world to direct you in the right way of serving God, and keeping his laws, I assure you, there is a great deal more in those laws about swearing, than you imagine, or have receiv'd by tradition from your ancestors; for they do not only require you, not to forswear yourselves, but not to swear at all; *but I say unto you, swear not at all.*

BUT it is strange to observe, that these plain and perspicuous words, which were design'd to explain those of the moral law, have been as little understood, and as falsely interpreted by some, as those which they were designed to explain: for as the *Jews* contracted the sense of the moral commandments into so narrow a compass, as if no more was intended by them, but that men should not forswear themselves; so some that are called christians, as *Pelagians, Anabaptists, and Quakers*, have extended these words of our saviour so far, as to make them reach all manner of swearing, upon the most necessary and solemn occasions that can happen: which is every way as false and absurd as the other. And therefore, to prevent your falling into any mistakes about them, I shall first explain our saviour's will and pleasure in them, what he doth not, and what he doth mean, by not swearing at all; and then shew how much it concerns all men carefully to observe what he here commands, saying, *but I say unto you, swear not at all.*

BY swearing, therefore, we are to understand, the calling God to witness the truth of what is said; for that is the usual definition of an oath, or the common notion of swearing in general. To make us sociable creatures, or capable of conversing with one another, God hath given us the use of speech, or language, whereby we can express or declare our thoughts and intentions to one another, which otherwise must always have lain hid in our own breasts, and unknown to all our fellow-creatures: whereas, by this means, we may know what another thinks, only by hearing him speak, at least so far as we are sure that his heart and his tongue go together. But that we can never be perfectly sure of, so long as men are in their imperfect state, and, as the psalmist speaks, are *all liars*, Psal. cxvi. 11. Rom. iii. 4. for they may say one thing and think or intend another; and none knows whether they think as they speak, or intend to do what they promise, but only God, the searcher of hearts: and therefore, the calling of him, or naming him as witness of the truth of what we say, is the greatest assurance that we can give to one another, that we really think or intend in our hearts, what we utter with our lips: which if it be in a matter of fact, past or present, it is call'd an assertory oath, because we assert or affirm it to be so; if it be about something to come, which we say we will or will not do, it is called a promissory oath; unto which two, all sorts of oaths may be reduced.

THIS being premised concerning the nature of oaths in general, we must, in the next place, observe, that these words of our saviour cannot possibly be so understood as if it was a thing in itself unlawful; and therefore, he would never have us take an oath, nor swear upon any occasion whatsoever, although lawful authority, or necessity require it; for we must not interpret one place of scripture so as to make it contradict another. But it is plain, both from the old and new testament, that to swear, or call God to witness what we say, was always reckon'd not only lawful but necessary, upon some occasions: which, that I may fully convince you of, and so keep you from ever falling into the absurd and dangerous error of some in our days, who think, or at least pretend it to be unlawful to swear, or take any oath, tho' administr'd by lawful authority, in a matter also that is lawful, I desire you to consider;

First, We find almighty God himself, the supreme law-giver of the world, I say, we find him often swearing, sometimes by himself, sometimes by his holiness, which is himself, *the Lord hath sworn by his holiness*, saith the prophet *Amos*, iv. 2. So, *once have I sworn by my holiness*, saith he himself, *that I will not fail David*, Psal. lxxxix. 35. And elsewhere, *I swear by myself*, saith the Lord, *that this house shall become a desolation*, Jer. xxii. 5. And upon *Abraham's* offering up his son *Isaac*, by myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, *for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thy only son, that in blessing I will bless thee*, Gen. xxii. 16, 17. From whence the apostle observes, that *when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swear by himself*, Heb. vi. 13. *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirm'd*

it by an oath, ver. 17. and if he sware who cannot sin, we may be confident it can be no sin to swear.

MOREOVER, as God himself is pleased sometimes to swear by himself, so he hath not only permitted, but commanded us to swear by his name, saying, *thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name*, Deut. vi. 13. And again, *thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name*, Deut. x. 20. From whence it appears, that he hath made this part of that worship and honour which we ought to pay him, and that it is as much our duty, upon occasion, to swear by his name, as it is to fear and serve him. And in those very commandments, wherein he requires us not to take his name in vain, and not to swear by his name falsely, Exod. xx. 7. Levit. xix. 12. he plainly intimates, that we may and ought to swear truly by it.

ACCORDINGLY we find the holy angels themselves swearing by him; and the angel, saith St. John, *which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever*, Rev. x. 5. So also Dan. xii. 7. And as for the saints in the old testament, there is nothing more frequently recorded of them, than their administering and taking of oaths; as Abraham made his steward swear by the Lord the God of heaven, and the God of earth, Gen. xxiv. 3. but such examples are so frequent, that I need not mention them.

BUT I cannot omit that which, if it be possible, is more observable, even that God himself hath given us directions how to swear, saying, *thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness*, Jer. iv. 2. where we may observe his command to swear, in general, *thou shalt swear*; the form of the oath he would have taken, *the Lord liveth*; and then the manner how he would have it taken, *in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness*: in truth, that is, that the thing a man swears to, be true in itself, and known to be so to him that sweareth, and that he swears it truly, sincerely, heartily, without any equivocation or mental reservation, and so be not in the number of those which the same prophet speaks of, saying, *though they say, the Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely*, Jer. v. 2.

AND as you must swear in truth, so also in judgment, that is, with that caution, prudence, discretion, and reverence, as becometh those who speak of him, by whom they speak, in whom they live, and by whom their very thoughts as well as actions are weigh'd. And therefore, all those offend against this rule, who swear in passion, rashly, or inconsiderately, as Herod, when he swore that he would give his wife's daughter whatsoever she asked, Matt. xiv. 7. and the princes of Israel, who swore to the Gibeonites without asking at the mouth of the Lord, Josh. ix. 14, 15.

AND then it must be done also in righteousness, that is, the matter of the oath must be lawful and just, agreeable to God's holy word, or, at least, no way contrary to it, as David's was, when he swore he would destroy all that pertained to Nabal, 1 Sam. xxv. 22. and what is thus sworn must be righteously and faithfully performed, otherways it cannot be said to be sworn in righteousness: and therefore the prophet inveighs against those *which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness*, Isa. xlviii. 1. because they did not take care to act accordingly. These are the rules which God himself hath prescribed to be diligently observed in every oath that a man takes; and therefore, he that takes an oath according to these rules, may be confident he doth not sin, for he acts according to God's own directions, who never teaches men how to sin, but how to do that which is lawful and right in his eyes. And therefore, he having directed us how to swear, he hath thereby given us an undeniable argument that we may lawfully do it, so that we do but observe his directions in it. And hence it is said, that every one who thus *sweareth by the Lord shall glory, or be commended, but the mouth of them that speak lyes, or swear falsely, shall be stopped*, Psal. lxxiii. 11. and *he that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not, is reckon'd among those who shall abide in the tabernacle of God, and dwell in his holy hill*, Psal. xv. 4.

NEITHER hath God only given us these directions about swearing, but he gave power also to judges and magistrates to administer an oath in doubtful cases; as if there be a controversy between two neighbours, concerning an ox or sheep, *the oath of the Lord shall be between them, and by that the judges shall determine the cause,*

cause, *Exod. xxii. 10, 11.* And in the case of jealousy, *the priest shall charge the woman with an oath, Numb. v. 19.* Thus *Abimelech* made *Abraham* swear to be true to him, *Gen. xxiv. 23.* *Abraham* made his servant swear, that he would not take a wife to his son *Isaac* of the daughters of *Canaan*, *Gen. xxiv. 3.* *Jacob* made *Joseph* swear that he would not bury him in *Egypt*, but amongst his forefathers, *Gen. xlvii. 30, 31.* Many such examples there are all over the old testament, which plainly shew, that the saints of God in those days, made no scruple at all of giving or taking oaths, but looked upon it as their duty in some cases to do it.

THE same may be said also of those in the new-testament, especially *St. Paul*, who perfectly understood the mind of God and of our saviour in my text, and yet often swears, or calls God to witness the truth of what he said, and that too when he was inspired with the infallible spirit of God himself, in writing his mind and will; as where he saith, *for God is my witness, whom I serve, with my spirit in the gospel of his son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, Rom. i. 9.* and elsewhere, *moreover, I call God to record upon my soul, that to spare you, I came not as yet to Corinth, 2 Cor. i. 23.* and again, *now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not, Gal. i. 20.* which are all as plain and solemn oaths as any man can take; and therefore he that presumes to say, it is unlawful to take an oath, doth not only condemn *St. Paul*, but he blasphemes that holy spirit, by which he spake, when he took those oaths; and how great a sin that is, let them look to it, who are guilty of such horrid presumption.

To all which I shall only add, that the same *St. Paul*, who, doubtless, wrote the epistle to the *Hebrews*, though his name be not put to it, he, I say, expressly says, *for men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife, Heb. vi. 16.* where he doth not only approve of taking oaths or swearing upon lawful occasions, but acquaints us also with the great end and necessary use of it, even to put an end to all strife; this being, as it is expressed in the civil law, *maximum expediendarum litium remedium*, the greatest remedy that ever was or can be found out for the determining of controversies; for by swearing we call the greatest person in the world to vouch the truth of what we say, him who certainly knows whether we swear truly or no, and who will as certainly punish us if we do not.

AND hence it is, that swearing by his name is so great a part of that worship which we owe to God, because by that we testify our acknowledgment both of his omniscience, and his supreme authority over the world; and that is the reason why he commands us to swear by his name, and not by any other: as where *Joshua*, in his name, charges the people of *Israel* not to make mention of the name of the heathen Gods, *nor cause to swear by them, Josh. xxiii. 7.* and God was so angry with them afterwards for doing it, that he saith, *how can I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no Gods, Jer. v. 7.* where he plainly makes the swearing by any other but himself, to be downright forsaking him, because, by that, men give that honour unto others which is due only to the true God, and so set them up for Gods, by swearing by their names: from whence it appears, that it is so far from being unlawful, that it is a necessary duty to swear by the true God, and by him only.

AND this, as I might easily shew, hath been the constant sense and practice of the church of Christ in all ages; but unless men be resolved to contradict the holy scriptures themselves, rather than their own humours and fancies, the many plain undeniable proofs and instances that I have now produced out of the old and new testament, must needs be sufficient to convince them, that swearing by the name of God is not in itself a sin, but a duty, that we both may and ought to take an oath, when it is administered to us by lawful authority, as in courts of judicatory, for the deciding of controversies betwixt man and man, and upon such like weighty occasions; and, by consequence, that these words of our blessed saviour, *swear not at all*, cannot possibly be so understood, as if he would never have us take an oath upon any occasion whatsoever; for this would be a plain contradiction to the law and the prophets, which he himself, in this very chapter, saith, he came not to destroy but to fulfil, *Mat. v. 17.* and so this would make him contradict himself; which let them have a care of, who put such a mischievous and absurd sense upon his sacred words.

BUT you'll say, perhaps, what then can he mean? Doth not he say in plain terms, *swear not at all*? he doth so; and if we take his words singly by themselves, without considering what goes before or follows after them, there might be some colour for such an exposition, if the rest of the scriptures would allow of it. But this is not the way of finding out the true sense of holy scripture, or any other writing: for where several words are put together to signify an author's mind, you must not take it from some of them without the rest, but from all together as he expressed it; otherwise you do not take his sense from the words, but put your own upon them: the not observing whereof hath been the occasion of most of the heresies and errors that have disturbed the church. Indeed, there is nothing so absurd or ridiculous but may be extorted from some place of scripture or other, if you take the words apart by themselves, without considering the scope and design of the place: but if you do that, as all must do, that would interpret the scriptures aright, the sense will then be plain and easy.

As in this very place, these words, *swear not at all*, are not a proposition of themselves, but part of our saviour's divine discourse concerning oaths, or swearing, as it was then used by the *Jews*. And if we cast our eye upon the whole discourse, and look upon it all together, we shall clearly see that our saviour is not here speaking of taking oaths before a magistrate, or upon any publick and solemn occasion, but of swearing in our common discourse and conversation with one another: and that is plainly the swearing which he forbids; as appears,

First, FROM the occasion of these words in the verse before my text, *again, ye have heard that it hath been said of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thy vows*: where he plainly speaks of promissory oaths, which a man is bound afterwards to perform: but such oaths are never taken in courts of justice, for the deciding of controversies, but only between man and man.

THE same appears also from what follows, *swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool, &c.* For the understanding of which, we must know, that the *Jews* were permitted to swear by the name of God only before their magistrates: but by their false interpreters of scripture, they were allow'd in their common discourse to swear by any thing else, as by heaven, by earth, by *Jerusalem*, by their head, or the like. But our saviour here makes no mention of their swearing by the name of God, but only by other things; which plainly sheweth, that he doth not meddle here with their taking oaths before their magistrates in the name of God himself, but only with their swearing by other things: which seeing they never did, but only in their common discourse, his words must be understood only of such swearing as they commonly used betwixt one another: which they did not look upon as unlawful, or binding, because the name of God was not used in it; as might easily be shewn, not only out of the *Talmud*, and other *Jewish* writers, but from *Philo* himself, who lived about our saviour's time, and delivers the sense and practise of the *Jews* in this matter.

THIS therefore is that which our saviour here forbids, and gives us the reason why he doth so; even because he that swears by heaven, or by earth, or any such thing, he doth, in effect, swear by God himself: *swear not at all*, saith he, *neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black*: as if he had said, heaven is God's throne, earth his footstool, *Jerusalem* his city, thy head his workmanship; for none but he can make so much as one hair white or black: and therefore he that sweareth by these things, swears, in effect, by God himself; for, as he himself saith in another place, *whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein; and he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon*, Mat. xxiii. 21, 22. And therefore the swearing by such things ought to be as much avoided, as swearing by the name of God himself, in whom it terminates. And this is that which St. *James* also means, where he saith, *but above all things, my brethren, swear not at all; neither by heaven, neither by earth, neither by any other oath*, Jam. v. 12. that is, use no kind of oaths whatsoever in your common discourse; for they are all sinful, when so commonly and rashly used, one as well as another.

BUT

BUT to put it beyond all doubt, that our Lord speaks here only of common swearing, he himself is pleased to tell us so with his own mouth, saying, *but let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay*, ver. 37. that is, let your ordinary discourse, or speech, as the word signifies, whereby you converse and commune together, let it be pure and simple; let it not be corrupted with oaths or curses, but only affirming what you think to be true, or denying what you think to be false, without intermingling any sort of oaths with your words, or confirming what you say by swearing it is, or it is not so; *for whatsoever is more than these*, saith he, *cometh of evil*: it proceeds from an evil mind, it produceth an evil custom, it is of an evil example, and tends to an evil end; and so it comes from the evil one, the devil himself, who, as he is the father of lies, so he is the father too of all profane swearing and cursing, which usually go together; cursing being indeed but one sort of swearing, and one of the worse sorts too, if one may be said to be worse than another, when all are as bad as bad can be.

BY this time, I hope, you all perceive your saviour's mind and meaning in these words, wherein he commands you not to swear at all in your ordinary conversation and discoursing with one another: and this is that command which I must now advise and beseech you all carefully to observe. I hope the far greatest part of the congregation do already abominate this horrid sin of common and profane swearing, and so need not any arguments to dissuade them from it. But I fear that some of you are too much guilty of it: and there are none of you but may be sometimes liable to fall into it, by the prevalence of the devil's temptations, or of your own passions, or perhaps by your too easy and sinful compliance with the company you keep; there being many, with whom you may sometimes have occasion to converse, so horribly addicted to this vice, that they cannot speak without an oath; and are so far from observing this command, *swear not at all*, that they always swear, whensoever they discourse upon any subject, though never so trifling and impertinent; and all vice being infectious to our corrupt nature, they who keep company with such profane wretches, are apt in a short time, to become such themselves. There are many, too many instances, to be found of this kind; and therefore it will be necessary to arm you, as much as possible, against this damnable sin, which is grown so common in this city, and the whole land, that, unless it be prevented by a timely repentance, we have just cause to fear some extraordinary judgment will be inflicted upon us for it.

FOR which purpose, therefore, I desire you first to consider, that you are all christians, and hope to be saved by Christ; and therefore, one would think, that you need not any other arguments to persuade you not to swear, than that *Christ* himself hath said, *swear not at all*. Christ, who lov'd you, and gave himself for you; Christ, whom you profess to love and honour above all the persons in the world; Christ, who said, *if ye love me, keep my commandments*, he hath commanded you not to swear: and if ye will not keep this commandment, which of all his commandments can ye keep? None certainly. This is so plain, so cheap, so easy a commandment, that there is scarce another like it in all the bible; for it is only not to swear, not to do that which only will undo you, without affording you either pleasure or profit, or honour, or any thing that ye can so much as pretend to be a temptation to it: insomuch that I have sometimes wondred with myself, what should be the reason that this sin is so common in the world; and, after all my search, can find out but this one, which is, that men will commit this sin, because it is a sin. If God had never forbid you to swear, or had commanded you to do it, you would have been as backward to it, as ye are to praying or praising his name: but seeing he hath charged you not to swear, although there is nothing else can tempt you to it, yet you will do it; you will therefore do it, because God would not have you. O dreadful impiety? who can think of it without horror and amazement? that ever mankind should be so corrupted! that men should fly in the very face of heaven, and offend God only that they may offend him! And yet this is the case of every common swearer: and therefore if any of you be such, do not look upon yourselves any longer as christians, until you leave it off; nor of the communion of saints, but of the society of those wicked spirits, who sin for sin's sake. Be sure, ye are far from being christians; for christians are such as believe in Christ. But how can you so much as profess to believe in Christ, when you will not do any one thing that he bids you? And if you will not do this, if you will not so much as leave swearing, in obedience to him, ye may be confident that
you

you obey him in nothing, but live in the constant transgression of all his laws. And with what confidence then can you expect to be saved by him? No, mistake not yourselves, he is the *author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*, and to none else. *Heb. v. 9.* And therefore, as ever you desire that Christ should stand your friend and save you; as ever you desire that God would have mercy upon you for his sake, for his sake *swear not at all*: or, if you will not leave off this sin for Christ's sake, at least, do it for your own sakes. If ye do not care whether he save you or no, however be not so foolish as to condemn yourselves; as you plainly do, by every oath you swear in common discourse: you condemn yourselves for a company of perfidious and lying wretches, that no man can believe one word you say, except you swear to it; except you bring a voucher, and the greatest too in the world, to attest the truth of what you say. Doth not this plainly argue, that you are conscious to yourselves of great hypocrisy and deceit? Doth it not clearly shew, that you have forfeited all your credit and reputation in the world, so that you cannot be trusted or be believed without an oath? for otherwise, what need you swear? would not men believe you without an oath, if they took you for honest and good men? yes, surely, far better than with it: for, after all, your swearing to it is so far from gaining any credit to what you say, that it utterly destroys it; for it is a most certain truth, that he that will swear will lye: he that makes no conscience of offending God, will make none of deceiving me. And therefore if we hear a man swear, we have no ground to believe one word he saith, upon that very account, because he swears to it: but rather, we have reason to suspect every thing he saith to be false, in that by his swearing he discovers himself to be a man of no conscience; and therefore, one that matters not how much he imposeth upon us. So that whatsoever some may think, this is certainly one of the most foolish, ridiculous, and absurd vices that a man can be guilty of; and which many of the heathens themselves frequently inveighed against, and looked upon it as a most horrid sin, to swear even by their false Gods.

BUT what a sin then must it be to swear vainly and rashly by the true God, the great, the almighty God, that made and governs the whole world? far greater, doubtless, than can be described. The mere speaking of him or taking his sacred name into our mouth in vain, and to no purpose, is a great sin, expressly forbidden in the third commandment; how much more the common swearing by it, and calling upon him, to attest the truth of what we say, upon every slight occasion? It is true, all sins are committed against the laws of God, and so against his authority and power. But this is committed against his name, his person itself: it is downright affronting his divine majesty to his face. Would a prince take it well, if his subjects should call him, upon all occasions, to witness what they talk among themselves? would he bear with such insolency? or suffer such contempt to be thrown continually upon him? yet a prince and his subjects are fellow-creatures: but for creatures to do this to their almighty creator, for dust and ashes to call the sovereign of the world to vouch their impertinent talk and chat, is such a piece of impudence and presumption, that did we not see it too frequently done, one would think it impossible that any mortal should dare to do it, that they should dare to take his sacred name into their polluted lips, which he hath so expressly commanded all men to fear and dread, *that thou mayst fear*, saith he, *this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God*, Deut. xxviii. 58. How far are all they from this holy fear who presume, upon all occasions, to profane this glorious name? how plainly do they shew, that they have no fear of God before their eyes? so plainly, that it is no breach of christian charity to say, they have not; for if they had, they would be so far from taking his holy name in vain, that they would never dare to speak of him without fear and reverence; for their speaking of him would always call his greatness and glory to their minds. And who is able to think of so great and glorious a being, without reverence and godly fear? and who then can fear him, and not fear the taking his name in vain? Hence Solomon, makes this the great difference betwixt a wicked and a good man, that the one *swareth*, and the other *feareth an oath*, Eccles. ix. 2. A good man that fears God, fears the profaning of his holy name by oaths; but he that swears is a wicked man, therefore wicked, because he swears; wicked in the highest degree of wickedness: how should this make all men dread the thoughts of this horrid sin, which so plainly demonstrates them to be in the *gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity*?

ESPECIALLY, considering that this is not only a great sin of itself, but it is usually accompanied with others as great, and, if it be possible, greater than itself; for they that commonly swear, commonly curse too; and that both themselves and others: what dreadful curses do such foul-mouthed wretches usually denounce against their neighbours? Such as are not to be so much as named among christians: and yet they will bestow them as liberally upon themselves too as well as others; cursing and damning themselves (I dread to speak it) to the very pit of hell; as if they wish'd to be there before their time. I dare not so much as suppose there are any such among you: but if there be, I must tell them they need not take so much pains to curse and damn themselves, for God himself e're long will do it for them. Nay, he hath begun to do it already, in that he hath given them over to the power of the devil, who will be sure to hold them fast, till he hath gotten them into his own kingdom of darkness, where they will meet with all the bitter imprecations that ever came out of their mouths, and feel them for ever. This they will find to be one dismal effect of their taking God's name in vain,

AND besides, they, that swear often, often forswear themselves, much oftener, perhaps, than they themselves think of: for the custom of this sin makes it so natural and familiar to them, that they do not know when they commit it; but if ye tell them of it, will swear they did not swear. And not always knowing what or when they swear, they must needs frequently swear to that which is false, and as frequently omit the doing what they swear they will, and so forswear themselves, and be guilty of perjury in the sight of God.

AND it is well if there be not blasphemy in it too. Be sure their calling God, as they commonly do, to witness that which is false, is a plain contradiction either to his omniscience or truth: for it is as much as to say, that he doth not know it to be false, or if he doth, will nevertheless attest the truth of it: which cannot be judged less than downright blasphemy.

AND what dreadful punishments then must common swearers be obnoxious to? such as it would make one's ear to tingle, and one's heart to tremble, to hear or think of them. God himself hath told them with his own mouth, and hath given it under his hand too in the third commandment, written with his own finger, that *he will not hold them guiltless*; that is, he will be sure to punish them, one time or other, severely for it. He may suffer them to go on for a while in profaning his sacred name, until they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and then he'll shower down his judgments, in full proportion to their sins, until they utterly are destroyed. They have his own word for it, who cannot lie, and therefore they may believe it: and whether they now believe it or no, they shall one day feel it, whether they will or no; for God will not be mocked, much less will he suffer his sacred name to be profaned by his own creatures, without making them know what it is to provoke and dishonour him that made them.

HARK what God himself saith, by his angel, to the prophet *Zechariah*: the prophet in a vision had seen a flying roll, and the angel said to him, *what seest thou?* he answered, *a flying roll; the length thereof twenty cubits, the breadth thereof ten cubits.* Then said the angel to him, *this is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side, according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side, according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name. And it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof,* Zech. v. 2, 3, 4. Behold here a roll, or book rolled up, a great roll, twenty cubits long and ten broad, all full of curses on both sides; behold this roll flying swiftly about over the face of the whole earth; behold and it lighting at last upon every one that stealeth, and upon every one that sweareth, none escaping, that either rob their neighbours of their goods, or God of his honour, by taking his name in vain. Behold it lighting upon his house, and there remaining till it hath consumed both him and it, to the very timber and stones: whereby is signified God's determinate counsel and purpose, not to suffer false or common swearers to go unpunished; the roll will meet with them, the curse will light upon them one time or other, and destroy them root and branch.

NEITHER doth this sin destroy only particular persons and families, but whole nations, *because of swearing the land mourneth*, saith the prophet *Jeremiah*, chap. xxiii. 10. and this is ore of those sins for which God had a controversy with his own people, the inhabitants of the land of *Judea*, and for which he saith, *the land shall mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish*, *Hos. iv. 1, 2, 3.* God grant that this be not fulfilled upon our land, wherein this sin hath been, and, I fear, still is, as common as ever it was in *Judea*. It is true, the nation in general hath forbidden it, and enacted a law against it, and therefore I hope that God of his infinite mercy will not impute it to the whole nation, nor reckon it a national sin: but if the people of the nation do, notwithstanding the laws both of God and man, continue in it, some severe judgment will certainly fall upon them for it; at least, upon those who are guilty of it.

BUT I hope none of you are so: and if any of you be, give me leave to deal plainly with you; you have now heard that Christ himself hath commanded you not to swear at all: and it is not long but you must stand before his tribunal, where you must give an account how ye have observed this, as well as any other of his commands. Now, what will you plead for yourselves, what can you say in excuse for this sin? Will you say, that you did not know it was a sin? That you cannot; for I dare say ye knew it before, and have now heard it again to be so. Will you say, that ye were tempted to it? That ye cannot; for there can be no temptation to this, of all sins, but from your own wickeld and corrupt hearts. Will you say, that ye were so accustom'd to it that ye could not leave it? That you cannot; for you may as easily lay down as take up an ill custom if ye will. And besides, this will be so far from excusing, that it will highly aggravate your crime, as shewing, that you had committed it so often, that it was grown into custom and habit with you. What then will ye do? Nothing certainly but expect your sad and irrevocable doom from the judge of the whole world, who hath told you beforehand, what ye must expect: *but I say unto you*, saith he, *that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment, for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*, *Matt. xii. 36, 37.* And if we must give an account for every idle word, what a dreadful account must you give for all your swearing and cursing. If men shall be justified by their words, how can you be justified by yours, so expressly contrary to the laws of God? If men shall be condemned for their words, you certainly, of all men, can expect nothing but to be condemned for yours to everlasting shame and confusion. This *St. James* puts you in mind of, where he requires you above all things, not to swear at all, *lest ye fall into condemnation*, *Jam. v. 12.* for so ye will all do, except ye repent, and leave off this sin before it be too late. Ye may please yourselves, if you think good, at present with it, but know this, that God, ere long, will bring you into judgment for it, and there pronounce that righteous sentence upon you, *depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, *Matt. xxv. 41.*

CONSIDER these things, all ye that have hitherto been any way addicted to this heinous vice, and tell me whether it doth not behove and concern you to break it off immediately by an hearty and sincere repentance? I say immediately, lest otherwise ye may happen to die first, and so perish for ever. Wherefore let me advise and beseech you all, as ye either fear God, or love your own souls, to do it now; now that ye have heard how odious and abominable it is before God and man; now do ye begin to abominate and hate it so, as stedfastly to resolve, by God's assistance, never to commit it any more. And, for that purpose, keep these words of your blessed saviour, *I say unto you, swear not at all*; keep them always fresh in your minds and memories: and lest you should forget them, desire your friends, and relations, and acquaintance, to put you in mind of them, every time they hear you so much as take the name of God in vain. And when you hear others do it, be not afraid nor asham'd to rebuke them for it: it is the greatest kindness you can shew them, and they will thank you for it another time, and God will be well-pleased with it. And if any be so proud and obstinate as to scorn reproof, and notwithstanding all that God or man can say, will still retain and practise this execrable vice, let them be unto you as heathens and publicans, keep company no longer with them, but shun and avoid them, as you would do persons infected with the plague, lest you catch it of them.

BUT that you may be sure never to fall into this sin hereafter, keep as far as possibly you can from it, come not near the borders of it, but run from every thing that

that looks like swearing; remember the apostle's words, *abstain from all appearance of evil*, 1 Thess. v. 22.¶ There are many words and phrases commonly used among us, of which some have made a question, whether they be oaths or no: but whether they be or no, it is your safest way to avoid them. It may be a sin to use them, but can be none not to use them. And there are words and phrases enough, whereby you may express your minds upon all occasions, besides those that look like oaths, whether they be or no. And it is as easy to accustom yourselves to those which are unquestionably lawful, as to such whose lawfulness is by many questioned: this also is most agreeable to our saviour's will, who doth not only command you, not to swear, but requires that your communication be *yea, yea, nay, nay*, ver. 37. that is, that you only affirm or deny what is said, without backing it with any thing like an oath; that so every thing you speak may be, at least, harmless and innocent; and, if possible, useful too; according to that excellent rule laid down by the apostle, *let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may administer grace unto the hearers*, Eph. v. 29.

BUT after all, that ye may never have the least occasion to swear, or to confirm what ye say by oaths, ye must be sure to be always firm and constant to your promise, just and righteous in your dealings, true and faithful in all your words, so as never to tell a lye to gain the world; and then your word will be sooner taken than another's oath, and you'll both act and talk together as becometh christians, as becometh the dutiful and obedient servants of the blessed Jesus, careful to observe and do whatsoever he hath bidden you, that so ye may receive that blessed sentence from him, *well done, good and faithful servants; enter ye into your master's joy*.

SERMON CXXVII.

A Spittal-Sermon.

I TIM. vi. 17, 18.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

THE great article of Christ's resurrection from the dead is so necessary to be thoroughly consider'd, and firmly believ'd, by all that expect salvation from him, that the church doth not think it sufficient to set apart that day only on which it happen'd, but hath added the two next also, for the annual commemoration of it. And accordingly we have now spent three days together in the exercise of our faith and meditations upon this great truth, that Jesus Christ, the eternal son of God, having in our nature suffer'd death upon the cross for our redemption, was, upon the third day after, rais'd again to life, and ever lives to make intercession for us: whereby we are fully assur'd, that *he is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him*: and that we in particular are all capable of obtaining eternal salvation, by his merits and mediation for us.

BUT, that we may actually obtain what he hath thus purchased for us, it is necessary to observe whatsoever he hath been pleased to require of us; which would be a very proper meditation for this day. But I shall consider it no further at present, than as it respects the occasion and end of our assembling here at this time. Which is to consider of the most effectual means to excite and stir up those, who are able, to a liberal contribution to the relief of the sick and needy; for that this is one of those great duties which Christ our saviour requires of us, is plain from the words which I have now read, as being dictated by the spirit of Christ himself to his apostle St. Paul, who having ordain'd Timothy a bishop, and settled him in the see of Ephesus, the chief city of all the Proconsular Asia, he, in this divine epistle, sends him instructions how to govern the church, and how to preach and propagate the gospel which he himself had planted there; and, in the foot of the epistle, he, in the name of Christ, lays this command upon him, *charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, &c.*

WHICH words, tho' at first directed only to Timothy, were, in him, intended for all succeeding ministers and preachers of the gospel: such, I mean, who are solemnly ordained and set apart for that work. We are all oblig'd, in our preaching, to observe this command; without which we can never do any good upon those

those that hear us. For so long as mens minds are set upon riches, and the things of this world, we may preach our hearts out, before we can ever persuade them, in good earnest, to mind that happiness which the son of God hath procured for them in the world to come. This St. Paul knew well enough: and therefore hath left this upon record, not only as his advice and counsel, but as a strict command and duty, incumbent upon all who are sent to preach the gospel, that they charge them who are rich, not to be *high-minded*, &c.

WHERE we may first observe, how we are here enjoined and empowered to *charge them that are rich*, &c. A word much to be observed; he doth not say, desire, beseech, counsel, or admonish, but *παράγγελετοῖς πλουτοῖς*, charge, command the rich: the word properly signifies such a charge as judges at an assize or sessions make in the king's name, enjoining his subjects to observe the establish'd laws and statutes of the kingdom. And thus it is that we are here required to charge you, in the name of our great lord and master, the king of all kings, that you *be not high-minded*, &c.

NEITHER doth this power, committed to us, extend itself only to the meaner sort of people, who, by reason of their extream poverty and want, may seem inferior to us, but even to the rich also, *charge them that are rich in this world*: and the reason is, because we come not to you in our own names, but in his that gives you all the riches you have, and can take them away again when he pleaseth, who makes the poor rich, and the rich poor, as he sees good; so that the rich and the poor are all alike to him, and equally subject to his authority and power. And therefore, we preaching only in his name, as his ministers, or heralds, authorized and commissioned by him, to publish and proclaim his will and pleasure to you, we can make no distinction, but must acquaint all indifferently with what he would have them do. And as for the rich, they are so far from being excepted out of our commission, that we are here commanded to charge several duties upon them, particularly *charge them*, saith the apostle, *that are rich in this world*.

BUT who are they? is a question that deserves a serious resolution; for most men, how much soever they have, yet not thinking themselves to have enough, are apt to fancy that they are not the persons whom the apostle means. But whatsoever we may think of ourselves, I believe there are but few here present except blue-coats, but who, in a scripture-sense, are *rich in this world*; for whatsoever any of you have, over and above your necessary maintenance, in that state of life to which God hath called you, that is properly your riches; as appears plainly from Agar's wish, *give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me*, Prov. xxx. 8. from whence it naturally follows, that as nothing but want of convenient food, is poverty, so whatsoever any man hath above that, all circumstances consider'd, is his riches: and such a one is truly *rich in this world*, and may justly be reckoned among those upon whom we are here commanded to charge several duties: which, by his assistance who requires them of you, I shall endeavour briefly to explain to you.

First, THEREFORE, *charge them*, saith the apostle, *that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded*. A necessary caution for rich men; for riches are apt to puff men up with vain and groundless conceits of themselves; so as to fancy themselves to be better, because richer than other men. Which great mistake we are here commanded to rectify, by charging them not to entertain such high and proud conceits of themselves upon that account, but to be still as humble and lowly in their own eyes, as if they had no more than what is just necessary for them.

AND indeed whatsoever any of you have more, do but impartially weigh it in the ballance either of right reason, or your own experience, and you will soon find it so light and inconsiderable, that altho' you may be in many respects worse, you are no way really the better for it; and therefore can have no just cause to value yourselves at all upon it. You may fancy yourselves, I confess, to be rich, and others may esteem you to be so, but what real advantage is that to you? Are you ever the wiser, or juster, or holier for it? Do you love God, or God love you the more because you are rich? Are you ever the freer from cares and fears in your minds, from pains and aches in your bodies, or from crosses, troubles, and disappointments in the world? Do you enjoy more health, sleep sounder, or live longer than other men? Are ye ever the more satisfied because ye have much, or happier because richer? You cannot but all know the contrary; even

that the riches of this world are so far from quenching, that they do but increase your thirst after them, and instead of easing you of any trouble, bring more upon you. And therefore you have no cause, surely, to be proud and high-minded, but all the reason in the world to be humble and lowly under such a burden as they lay upon you. Especially considering, that as they cannot make you happy here, they'll very much hinder you from being so hereafter: I speak not this of myself; no, you have the word of Christ himself for it, saying, *verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*, Matt. xix. 23, 24. from whence, the least that can be inferred is, that it is more difficult for the rich than for the poor to be saved, and, by consequence, that their riches rather hinder than promote their salvation. Which certainly our saviour himself would never have asserted, but that he knew it infallibly to be true; neither would he have left it upon record, but that it is necessary that all people should know and believe it. Which whosoever doth, will find but little cause to be proud of his riches or high-minded, much less to

TRUST in uncertain riches. Which is the next thing we are here commanded to mind you of. An hard lesson, I confess, for a rich man to learn; nothing being more difficult than to have riches, and not to trust on them; as our saviour himself also intimates, in that he explains the one by the other, as things very rarely served, *Mark ix. 23, 24.* But to trust on riches is altogether as absurd and ridiculous as to be proud of them; for what can you trust in them for? they can neither make you good, nor do you good; they of themselves can neither feed you, nor cloath you, nor refresh you, nor stand you in any stead, without God's blessing; and that you can never expect, so long as you trust on them; that being one of the greatest sins that a man can be guilty of, nothing less than idolatry itself. And therefore, as the wiseman saith, *he that trusteth in his riches, shall fall*, Prov. xi. 28. that is, he shall fall into all the misery that God hath threatned against the worst of sinners; so far from having God's blessing upon what he hath, that every thing he hath shall be cursed to him. And besides, it is in vain to trust on uncertain riches, upon that very account because they are uncertain, or rather uncertainty itself: for so the greek words import, nor trust ἐπὶ πλάτῃ ἀδηλότῃ, in the uncertainty of riches,

BUT in the living God, who is a certain help and succour, stay and refuge, protection, defence, and all things to those who put their trust in him; and who, as the apostle here saith, *gives us all things richly to enjoy.* So that it is not your wit or policy, it is not your care or industry, it is not your trading and traffick in the world; it is only God that gives you all you have. And as it is he alone that makes you rich, so he can make you poor again when he pleaseth: and you have just cause to fear he will do so, unless you faithfully observe what is here charged upon you.

WHICH therefore that you may do, so as to have your riches both continued and blessed to you, as I have briefly shewn how you ought not to abuse them, so as either to be high-minded, or trust on them, so I shall as briefly explain the use he would you have put them to, that so you may both answer his ends in bestowing them upon you, and improve them to your own benefit and advantage.

HERE are four duties therefore, which the most high God doth positively charge upon all rich men.

1. **THAT** they do good, i. e. with their riches; that you neither hoard them up, out of a covetous humour, nor prodigally throw them away, either to any ill purpose, or to none at all; but that you put them to some good use, or, as the apostle here words it, *that you do good* with them: an expression much to be observed; for it seems from hence, that although riches be not really good for you in themselves, yet you may do good with them if ye will, and so make them really good and profitable to you. But for that purpose, it is necessary that you employ them only to good uses, and to such uses only, because they are good; so as to have no other end or design in it, but only to do good with what you have and there are two sorts of uses which riches may be put to, so as that you may be truly said to do good with them, and they are pious and charitable uses.

WHERE, by pious uses, I mean such as have an immediate respect to God himself, whereby your riches are employed towards the better performing of his service and worship, to the erecting, fitting, or adorning of places for it, to the more frequent celebration of it in such places, and to the maintenance and encourage-
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ment of those who are set apart for it, to the propagating of his gospel, to the conversion of *Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks*, and of all sorts of profane, atheistical and wicked persons to him, that his great name may be better known, and more honoured and revered in the world. It was for this end that he made you, and it was for this end that he hath made you rich, that he himself might receive more honour and glory from you; and therefore doth expressly require it of you, saying, *honour the Lord with all thy substance, with all thy riches, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase*, Prov. iii. 9. so that to honour God, by giving to such pious uses, is a great duty, not only necessary to be perform'd by all that are able, but necessary to be performed also in the first place, or before all other duties.

AND the reason is, because God is the universal proprietor, the head-land-lord of all the world, and you have nothing but what you receive from him, and hold immediately under him, who may fine you at pleasure, or throw you out of possession whensoever he sees good. Now lest you should forget this, even upon what tenure it is that you hold your estates, he hath enjoined you to pay him, as it were, a quit-rent, or tribute, out of what you possess, as an acknowledgment that it is only by his favour and blessing that you possess it. So that whatsoever it is that you do, or can offer to him, it is but a just debt that you owe him; which if you neglect to pay, you lose your tenure, and forfeit what you have to the great Lord of the manor, the supreme possessor of heaven and earth. Hence it is, that in all former ages they who were truly pious, and had a due sense of God upon their minds, were always ready and careful to pay this their homage and duty to him, out of what they held under him; insomuch, that many of them never thought they could give enough to any pious use, whereby to testify their acknowledgment of God's dominion over them, his bounty and kindness to them; as likewise their right and property in what they had.

A NOTABLE instance of this we have in the children of *Israel*; for when the tabernacle was to be built for the service of God, they were so far from being backward in contributing towards it, that they presently brought more than could be employed about it, *Exod. xxxvi. 5.* so it was too in the building of the temple, which *David*, and all the rich men of *Israel*, made great preparations for: and that they did it, that they might thereby acknowledge God to be the Lord and giver of all they had, and of their power to give it too, is plain from that divine hymn which *David* composed and sung upon that occasion, saying, *blessed be thou Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in heaven, and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thy hand is the power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,* 1 Chron. xxix. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. This was doing good indeed, and honouring God with their substance, according as he commanded. And whosoever consults the records of the church, may easily find, that christians, in all ages, have been as eminent as ever the *Jews* were for such pious and good works; seeing most of the churches in *Christendom*, and especially in this nation, were built by particular persons. And therefore, as ever any of you desire to be what you profess, christians indeed, such as the primitive christians were, and such as our holy religion obligeth us all to be, *men fearing God, and hating covetousness*, you must take all opportunities, as you have a great many, of expressing your thankfulness to God for what you have, by devoting as much as you can of it to his service and honour, to pious, or else, in the next place,

TO charitable uses, that is, to feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, redeeming the captive, instructing the ignorant, supplying the indigent, correcting the wicked, supporting the orphans and widows, healing the sick in mind or body, and the like. Which kind of works, although they immediately respect the poor, yet what is done for them, God looks upon as done to himself, as our Lord hath taught us, saying, *inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*, Matt. xxv. 43. And as they who withhold their tithes, which are due for the service of God, so they also who withhold their offerings, which are due for the maintenance of the poor, are said to rob God,
Mal.

Mal. iii. 8. I say, which are due for the maintenance of the poor; for as God so orders it in his providence, that we have always some poor among us, that we may always know where to pay our rent and acknowledgment to him; so he hath imposed it as a duty upon the rich to maintain them. By which means he makes plentiful provision of all things necessary for the poor, as well as for the rich; giving more to the rich than they have real need of, on purpose that they might impart to the poor, who have real need of it. So that the poor have as much right to your alms, as you have to the rest of your estates, and you both rob God and them, unless you give it to them.

WHEREAS, on the other side, whatsoever it is that we, in obedience to him, bestow upon the poor, God, of his infinite mercy, is pleased to accept of it, as part of the tribute which we owe to himself, whereby to acknowledge the receipt, of what we have from him, and express our thankfulness unto him for it. Which if we neglect to do, we have no ground to expect a blessing upon what we have, nor that it should be really good for us; for, as the apostle saith, *every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving*, not else; 1 Tim. iv. 4. But no thanksgiving is acceptable to God, but what is expressed by deeds as well as words: and therefore it is necessary for you to pay this duty and service to God, out of what you have, in order to the cleansing and sanctifying the residue of your estates to you; without which you have not the lawful and right use of what you possess, but every thing you have is polluted and unclean to you, as our saviour himself intimates, saying, *but rather give alms of such things as ye have, and behold, all things are clean to you*, Luke xi. 41. which divine sentence I heartily wish that you would always carry in your minds, and act accordingly: for I verily believe, that the great reason why so many estates are blasted so soon, and brought to nothing among us, as we see they are, is because men do not render unto God the duty and tribute which he hath charged upon their estates for himself and the poor, and then it is no wonder if God, in his providence, turn them out of possession, and give their estates to other persons, who shall be better tenants to him, and more careful to pay the duties which he requireth of them; according to that remarkable saying of the wiseman, *he that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor*, Prov. xxviii. 8. And therefore, in order to the securing your estates to yourselves, and your families, it is absolutely necessary to discharge the duties ye owe out of them to God and the poor; and so punctually to observe what we are here commanded to charge upon rich men, even *to do good*, and not only so, but,

2. *TO be rich in good works*, that is, not only to do good, but to do all the good you can with what you have, so as to proportion your good works to the riches which God hath given you wherewith to do them; according to that apostolical rule, *let every one lay by him for good uses, as God hath prospered him*, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. And so in the place before-quoted, Luke xi. 41. what we translate, *give alms of such things as ye have*, in the original it is, *τὰ ἐνόντα δότε ἐλεημοσύνην*, *give alms as much as ye are able*, for so the words properly signify. And, verily, whatsoever ye do of this kind, unless it be as much as you can, God will look upon it as nothing at all; for you must not think to compound with him. When God hath given you all ye have, he expects that you render him all that he requires of you, that is, as much as ye are able to give. And how little soever that be, yet it bearing a due proportion with your estates, it will be acceptable to him; as our great master himself hath taught us, when observing the rich men cast a great deal into the treasury, and a poor woman that cast in but two mites, he said, that she had cast in *more than they*, upon this account, because *they had cast in of their abundance, but she of her want had cast in all she had*, or as much as she could, Mark xii. 44, from whence we may infer, that the poor may be as *rich in good works* as the richest; forasmuch as God doth not measure the goodness of our works by their bulk or quantity, but by the proportion which they bear with our ability to do them. So that he that gives a penny, may do as good a work as he that gives a pound, and a better too, because his may be as much as he is able, and the others less; and so he that gives a little may do as much good, when he that gives much doth none at all. I wish you would all weigh and consider this, lest otherwise ye go out of the world, without ever having done one good work in it: for he that is not thus *rich in good works*, may be confident he doth no good at all with his riches.

BUT it is further to be observed here, that this expression, *rich in good works*, plainly implies, that *good works* are indeed our principal riches; and that you must not compute your riches from what you have, but from what you give to pious and good uses; for what you have is not yours, but God's in your hands; but what you give is yours in God's hand, who acknowledgeth that you lend it to him, and promiseth to pay it you again, *Prov. xix. 17.* And therefore the next time you cast up your accounts to know how rich you are, do not reckon upon what money you have lying by you, nor upon what houses or lands you have, nor upon what men owe you; but reckon upon what you have transmitted into the bank of heaven, upon what treasure you have laid up there, upon how much you have distributed to pious and charitable uses: for, whatsoever you may think at present, I dare assure you, that will be found to be your only riches another day. Wherefore, as ever any of you desire to be rich indeed, you must take this course, do all the good you can with what you have, and then you'll be rich in the esteem of God himself; *rich*, as the apostle here speaks, *in good works*. But for that purpose you must observe, likewise, what follows, even to be,

3. *READY to distribute*; that is, ready upon all occasions to pay your tribute to God, whensoever he, in his providence, calls for it, catching at all opportunities to do good, and glad when you can find any, and making some where you can find none; *as we have opportunity*, saith the apostle, *let us do good unto all men*, *Gal. vi. 10.* implying, that when we can get an opportunity to do good, whatsoever other business is neglected, we must lay hold on that offer. God, be sure, is to be served in the first place: and therefore you must not adjourn and put off so great and necessary a duty to him, from day to day, much less to the last, as the custom of some is, who never give any thing to God, or the poor, so long as they can keep it themselves; but in their last will and testament, leave them, perhaps, a legacy, and then think they do a good work: but whatsoever good may be done by what is so given, it is no good work in him that gives it; for he doth not give it from himself, but from his heirs or executors; and therefore no thanks can be due to him for it. Wherefore, as ever you desire to do any good with what you have, you must be always *ready to distribute*; and not only so neither, but also

WILLING to communicate; which is the last duty here charged upon rich men, or rather, the last qualification requir'd to the doing good with their riches. You must communicate them, not only with your hands, but with your hearts too; *not grudgingly, or of necessity*, as if ye are angry that God hath laid such a tax upon your estates; for, as the apostle saith, *God loves a cheerful giver*, *2 Cor. ix. 7.* and will accept of none but free-will-offerings from you: insomuch that if ye be not as willing to do good-works, as ye are to have wherewith to do them, whatsoever works ye do, will have nothing of goodness in them: and therefore, in plain terms, as any of you desire to be *rich in good works*, as becometh christians, and as it is your interest as well as duty to be, you must not stay till you are compelled, or persuaded, or intreated by others to do them; but you must set upon them of your own accord, out of pure obedience to God, and from a due sense of your constant dependance upon him, and obligations to him, so as to take pleasure in pleasing him, and in paying your service and thanks to him, for the manifold blessings he hath heaped upon you.

AND, verily, one would think you should not need many arguments to persuade you to be willing to do that which is so much for your own good; that, without it, nothing that you have is really good to you: whereas by doing good with what you have to others, every thing you have will be good to yourselves, not only in this life, but also in that which is to come: for, by this means, as the apostle here adds, *you will lay up for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life.* A strange expression! so strange, that if the apostle himself had not said it, some would have question'd the truth of it. Yet it is no more than what our Lord himself assures us, where he saith, *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through and steal*, *Mat. vi.* For the understanding whereof, we may consider, that although there be no such intrinsick worth or value in good works, whereby they that do them can merit any thing from God, for their doing of them; yet being done in obedience to his will, and for the glory of his name, he accepts so graciously of them, that, for Christ Jesus his sake, he will most

certainly reward us for them, infinitely above what we can either desire or deserve: as we plainly see in *Cornelius*, who being a *devout man, one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always*; God was so well-pleased with him for it, that he dispatch'd an angel from heaven, on purpose to acquaint him, that his *prayers and his alms were gone up for a memorial before God*, and to direct him to the way how he might attain eternal life, *Acts* x. 4, 5. And this is that which our Lord means, when he saith, *make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations*, *Luke* xvi. 9. that is, distribute and employ the unrighteous and deceitful riches of this world, in such a way as is most pleasing and acceptable to God, that when they fail you, he may be your friend, and receive you into everlasting habitations. And, to put the matter quite out of dispute, he that will then be judge hath told us before-hand, that, at the last-day, he will either advance us to heaven, or condemn us to hell, according as we have or have not done good while we were upon earth, *Matt.* xxv. from all which we may certainly conclude, that to do good with what we have, is the only way to be ever the better for it; according to that remarkable saying of the rabbins, *טלח ממון צדקה* *good works are the salt of riches*, that which keeps them from corruption, and makes them savoury and acceptable to God, and, by consequence, useful and profitable to the owners.

THE sum of all is this, unless you, who are intrusted with the riches of this world, do faithfully discharge the trust that is reposed in you, by doing all the good you can with them, you deprive yourselves of the true enjoyment of them, and of all the advantage that you may receive from them; and, besides that, you forfeit your right and title to them, by the non-payment of the rent-charge which God hath reserved to himself upon them; and therefore may justly expect every moment to be turned out of possession: and although God forbear you for a while, all the while, perhaps, that you are in this world, yet in the next they will be so far from being a comfort, that they will be a torture and vexation to you; insomuch that you will then wish, with all your souls, that you had either never had them, or else had made better use of them: witness the rich man in the gospel, who was no sooner dead, but the next news we hear of him, was, that he was in hell, and had not so much as a drop of water to cool his inflamed tongue. Whereas, on the other side, if you do good with your riches, if you devote them to the service of God, and to the relief of the poor, you will not only secure both the possession and enjoyment of them to yourselves and your families here, but you will receive benefit from them hereafter too. So that your estates will not die with you, but you will have joy and comfort of them in the other world, and have cause to bless God for them to all eternity.

By this time, I hope, you are all so fully satisfied, both of the necessity of good works, and of the profit that will accrue unto you by them, that you are resolved, by the blessing of God, to take the next opportunity you can get of enriching yourselves this way. Wherefore nothing now remains, but to acquaint you, that you can never want an opportunity of doing either pious or charitable works, if ye will but set yourselves in good earnest about it.

As for works of piety, here is the once famous cathedral of *St. Paul*, dedicated to the most solemn worship and service of the most high God, demolish'd, as ye know, together with the city, by a dreadful fire; and tho' your own houses have been long since rebuilt, yet this, the house of God, the mother-church, not only of this city, but of the whole diocese, is not to this day, nor even can be finish'd, without a more liberal contribution than hath been hitherto made for it; which is a great shame and reproach to the city, and the whole kingdom. Besides that, there are many churches wanting in the suburbs of the city, or near to it; and in several parts of the kingdom, the service of almighty God is either totally omitted, or very meanly perform'd, for want of a sufficient maintenance for the performance of it. And whatsoever you give towards such uses, you may be confident that God will accept of it as done to himself, it having so immediate relation to his own honour, and to the exercise of the holy religion, that he, of his infinite goodness, hath establish'd among us.

BUT as you ought not to be altogether for charitable uses, so as to neglect the pious, so neither ought ye to lay out all upon pious uses, so as to neglect the chari-

charitable ; for which you can never want an opportunity, having the poor always with you, as our Lord said. But the occasion of our present meeting bespeaks your charity in an especial manner for the poor, the sick, the maimed, and the distracted, that, being destitute of all other helps, are daily brought into the hospitals in and about this city, where they are maintain'd, and have both food and physick provided for them, meetly upon charity. Where what care is taken of them, and how God blessed the charity that is given to them, appears plainly from this list, or catalogue, of those who have been admitted into, and dismissed from these places the last year.

HAVING read this, I need not say much to it, the thing speaks enough for itself ; for you cannot but all believe, that they who are under the care and conduct of these hospitals, many whereof are now before you, are as great objects of charity as you can ever meet with in the world : and you cannot but be satisfied also, that whatsoever you shall give to them, will be as faithfully disposed of, to the ends and purposes for which you give it, as if you saw it done with your own eyes ; many of yourselves, and other the most eminent and worthy citizens, being the governors and overseers of it ; so that nothing is left for you to do, but to give in a right manner, that is, out of pure obedience to God's command, and in due proportion to the estates which he, for such purposes, hath entrusted with you : as many of your pious ancestors have done before you ; who, by their liberal contribution to the erecting and support of these hospitals, are still doing good with the estates they got upon earth, though they themselves be gone to heaven. Many of them are long since dead, and yet their good works live to this day, and will do so, I hope, to the end of the world : and why should not yours do so too ? Blessed be God, you have all, more or less, wherewithal to give, as they had : and if you be but as *ready to distribute*, and as *willing to communicate*, as they were, you also will have the benefit and comfort of your estates always continued to you, as they have.

THIS therefore is that which I would now advise you to. It is true, we are here empower'd not only to advise, but to *charge them who are in this world* to do good with their riches : but I hope I need not exercise that power here. I do not question, but that some of you are *rich in good works* already, and am willing to persuade myself, that others, for the future, will strive to be so ; and, for that purpose, are resolved to contribute liberally to these pious and charitable uses abovementioned. And therefore, all that I have now to desire of such, is only that you would do it presently, and also proportionably to what you have wherewith to do it, as remembering, that unless you proportion your charity to your estates, God may justly proportion your estates to your charity ; and, if you will not give as much as you are able, make you able to give no more than you do.

BUT fearing there may be some among you, who, notwithstanding all that hath been said, either out of diffidence of God's word, or carelessness of their own eternal good, are not yet resolved to do their duty in this particular, I must do mine, in acquainting you plainly, in the name of him who sent me, that it is not left to your own choice, whether you will do it or no ; but he, the eternal God, who made you, and e'er long will judge you, doth expressly require, command and charge all you who are *rich in this world*, that you be not *high-minded*, nor *trust in uncertain riches*, but in him *the living God*, who gives us all things richly to enjoy. That ye do good, that ye be rich in good works, that ye be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate ; laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life : through Jesus Christ our Lord ; to whom with the father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory. Amen.

S E R M O N CXXVIII.

Obedience to Governors.

I P E T. ii. 13.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.

WHEN *Josiah* king of *Judah* was slain in his wars with *Pharaoh Necho*, king of *Egypt*, the church and people of God were so mightily troubled, for the loss of so pious and excellent a prince, that they did not only lament his death at present, but they devoted the day, on which it happen'd, to fasting and humiliation, for many years after; as may be easily gather'd from 2 *Chron.* xxxv. 25. how much more cause have we to spend this day, as we are commanded, every year, in fasting and mourning, for the death of our late most gracious sovereign, king *Charles* the first, who was not killed, as *Josiah* was, by a foreign power, but murdered by his own subjects; not by chance of war, but by a formal pretended court of justice, the whole nation standing by, without endeavouring to rescue and deliver him; whereby it became, in a great measure, accessory to his death and murder, and, by consequence, guilty of that royal and sacred blood which was then shed. And notwithstanding the greatness of the sin, aggravated with the most dismal circumstances that any sin could then be capable of, it was a long time before the nation in general was sensible of it, or made any publick shew of repentance and remorse for it: until at length, being come to itself, and having its eyes opened, it plainly saw it was absolutely necessary to find out some expedient, whereby to prevent, if possible, these publick calamities, which so publick and horrid a sin would otherwise bring upon us.

WHEREUPON, being assembled in parliament, both lords and commons humbly besought his majesty, that this 30th day of *January*, whereon that execrable murder was committed, might be set apart and kept in all churches as an anniversary day of fasting and humiliation, to implore the mercy of God, that neither the guilt of the sacred and innocent blood, nor those other sins whereby, God was provok'd to deliver up both them and their king into the hands of cruel and unreasonable men, might at any time after be visited upon them or their posterity; which being accordingly assented to, and signed by our gracious sovereign, and so passed into an act, we, in obedience thereunto, are now here assembled for the purposes aforesaid.

BUT

BUT that we may not meet in vain, but may effectually obtain the mercy we fast and pray for, even the pardon of the sin which was this day committed, there are two things necessary to be done.

FIRST, *That we be truly humbled under the sense of it.*

And then,

SECONDLY, *That we be stedfastly resolved against all such sins for the future.*

As for the first, I suppose I need not say much, being willing to persuade myself, that you do not come hither to mock God, but that you really believe, that the sin ye have now confessed to him was so great and heinous, that he might justly inflict the severest of his judgments upon you, and the whole nation for it. For he that hath any sense at all, either of good or evil, cannot but be sensible, that there was as much sin or evil in the murder of the late king, as any one act could be capable of. The murder of a private person, tho' never so wicked, was always judged, by the very law of nature, to be one of the most wicked acts that mankind could be guilty of. But what then shall we think of the murder of a king, a wise, a sober, a just, a merciful, a pious king? or rather, who can think of it at all, without horror and amazement? especially when we consider how many other sins concurred to the effecting of it, or else were joined with it; pride, envy, malice, covetousness, theft, sacrilege, hypocrisy, schism, sedition, lying, perjury, treason, rebellion, what not? and such a sin as this, which was not only so great in itself, but had such a train of the most diabolical vices attending upon it, either going before, or else following after it, what punishment could be too great for it? what could be great enough? certainly, if God should have punished this sin according as it deserved, the whole nation, before now, had been turned into an *aceldema*, a field of blood. It is true, he hath already laid more than ordinary punishments upon the nation in general, and upon this city in particular, which was so deeply concerned in this sin. But we must acknowledge, that he hath yet punished us less than this iniquity deserv'd, and have just cause to expect much greater judgments to be still behind, which will certainly fall upon us, unless prevented by a timely and sincere repentance.

AND this is the reason why we are commanded to keep this day so strictly, that, if it be possible, we may avert that vengeance that hangs over our heads, and is ready, each moment, to fall upon us, for that sacred and innocent blood that was this day shed amongst us: for which end we have already been humbling ourselves before almighty God, under the sense of it: and so have, in some measure, done the first thing, which I said was necessary thereunto. But this will avail us nothing without the other, as not being sincere and cordial; for no man can be said truly to be humbled for any sin, that still continues in the practice of it. And it is not he that only confesseth, but *whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall have mercy*, Prov. xxviii. 13. Hence it is that the church hath not only prescribed us a form of sound words, wherewith to address ourselves to God, and implore his mercy in the pardon of this sin, but hath likewise appointed such a portion of scripture for the epistle this day, wherein we are expressly enjoined, both to avoid such sins as this was, and to perform the contrary duties for the future. Which therefore I thought good to pitch upon for the main subject of my discourse, if by any means I may be so happy as to convince you of the necessity that lies upon you, as christians, to make conscience of doing what is here commanded by the apostle, saying, *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*. Where we may first observe two things in general.

I. THAT this is as clear and positive a command, as any in the whole bible. So that we are as much obliged to *submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*, as we are to pray, to hear, or perform any other duty whatsoever. And so, on

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the other side, the transgression of this is as great a sin, as the breach of any other law. And he that doth not punctually observe what is here commanded, he lives in a known sin, or in the wilful neglect of a known duty; and, by consequence, whatsoever he may profess, he is no good man, much less a good christian, who does not always make conscience of one duty as well as of another.

2. WE may observe in general, That this command is as general as the epistle of which it is part, equally obliging all sorts of persons whatsoever, to submit themselves to their governors; according to that parallel place, *Rom. xiii. 1. let every soul be subject to the higher powers*: where *St. Chrysostom* observes, that *Πᾶσι ταῦτα διατάσσεται καὶ ἱερεῦσι καὶ μοναχοῖς, ἐχίτοις βιωτικοῖς μόνον*: *these things are commanded to all men, even to priests, and monks also, not only to seculars*. So that clergy and laity, all sorts of persons, of whatsoever degree, or quality, or estate, are bound to be subject to those whom God hath set over them. And therefore when the popes of *Rome*, who call themselves *St. Peter's* successors, take upon them to exempt the clergy from their subjection, and to absolve subjects from their allegiance to their prince, (as they have sometimes done in this, as well as other kingdoms) they act directly contrary to the decree of *St. Peter*, whom they pretend to succeed, or rather, to the express command of almighty God himself, who here expressly commands all subjects, under what prince soever they live, to submit themselves to him, and that at all times too; for the command is general, as to time as well as persons: so that whatsoever happens, still the command holds good, and ought to be religiously observed by all who would act as christians: *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*.

SEEING therefore that here is a plain and necessary duty, indispensably requir'd of all, and every one of you, you cannot but all be highly concern'd to understand the nature and extent of it, what it is that almighty God would have you do, when he commands you to *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man*. For which purpose, therefore, I shall briefly explain the terms or words by which he hath reveal'd his will to us, and consider,

1. WHAT we are to understand here by *every ordinance of man*; or, every human creature, as the words might be translated: which taken singly, or by themselves, may seem something obscure; and therefore criticks have exercised their wits variously upon them, and indeed to little or no purpose at all; for *St. Peter* doth sufficiently explain what he means by them, in the following words, saying, *whether it be to the king as supreme, or to governors, as unto them which are sent by him*. From whence it is manifest, that by *every ordinance of man*, he means, all and every one that is entrusted with the government of the place or country where we live. First, the king, as supreme magistrate, who receives his commission immediately from God himself, and therefore is accountable to none but him for the execution of it, as the apostle here plainly intimates, in that he calls him the *supreme*; for if he be supreme, then all other persons in his kingdoms are inferior to him, both singly and jointly: so that neither any one, nor all together, can justly pretend to any Power over him, because they are all under him; otherwise he would not be the supreme, as the apostle here calls him.

NEITHER is this duty to be performed only to the king himself, but, as the apostle adds, to *governors* also, as to those who are *sent by him*, that is, who are commissioned by the king, as he is by God, to administer justice, and execute the laws of the land, so far as their commission reaches. So that by this divine law we are obliged to submit ourselves to those whom the king sets over us, as well as to the king himself, whom God sets over us; for the commission which the king grants to them, is but part of that which he received from God; and therefore ought to be submitted to as much as if the king himself had still kept it in his own hands; for it is still his power in their hands, who are only entrusted by him with the administration or execution of it.

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HENCE therefore all that desire to perform this duty aright, must submit themselves, not only to the king in person, but likewise to all those who act by commission under him; or, as the apostle here words it, to the *governors*, as mayors, judges, aldermen, justices of the peace, or the like, who are sent by him.

BUT here we may further observe, that this command was laid upon all christians, when there was never a christian king or governor in the world, but were all rather inveterate enemies to christianity itself, and endeavour'd all they could to destroy and banish it out of the world; yet, for all that, all christians are here commanded to submit to them. Which shews, that this duty is to be perform'd to the king, as such: not because he is a christian, a just, a merciful king, but because he is a king authoriz'd by God to rule and govern us.

AND therefore the apostle here doth not command us to submit ourselves to the king, as good, or kind, or just, but as supreme; nor to governors, as eminent for grace and virtue, but as sent by the king. So that he that would perform this duty, as he ought, must not only submit himself to the king, but he must do it only as he is king, as one authorized and deputed by God to rule and govern the country. Neither must he submit to the governors which are sent by him, upon any other account, but merely because they are sent by him: for he that submits himself upon any other consideration, whatsoever other law he may observe in it, be sure he doth not obey this.

2. WHAT it is properly to *submit ourselves to every ordinance of man?*

To understand this aright, we may observe, first, that St. Paul, speaking of this submission, or subjection, which is due to the higher powers, he opposeth it to resisting of them, *Rom. xiii. 1, 2.* Wherefore he that resists the king, breaks this law, which requires submission to him. But who may be properly said to resist the king? all that conspire his death, oppose his authority, or take up arms against him; all that countenance, assist, or encourage those that do so; all that supply them with men, arms, counsel, or money; all that sow sedition, raise tumults, or promote riots and mutinying against the government; all that ever had, or still have an hand in dividing the king's subjects, and so in seducing them from their allegiance to him. In short, all that do any thing in opposition to the king, or strengthen the hands of those that do so, by defending of them, or adhering to them, they may properly be said to resist the king, and, by consequence, break this law, which requires submission to him. And so do they too, who, although they did not act, yet talk against him; such as St. Jude calls *filthy dreamers, who defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities*, *Jud. viii.* and so St. Peter, *2 Pet. ii. 10.* such as defame and censure the king or his officers of state, of injustice, neglect, or male-administration; such as write or disperse libels against him; such as raise or carry about stories, and ill reports of him, or his government, to lessen him in the esteem of the people, and so take off their love and affection from him; for such things plainly tend to the disturbance of his government, and to the making his people uneasy under it, and ready to catch at all opportunities of rising up against it, and therefore is a manifest resisting of him, and, by consequence, a breach of this command. Yea, this, as well as all other divine laws, doth questionless reach the heart, as well as the hands and tongues of men: so that we are obliged by it to harbour no treasonable or rebellious thoughts against the king, nor to entertain any ill or low opinion of him, much less to desire or wish any evil to him, *Eccles. x. 20.* Above all, we are obliged by this law, not to entertain such seditious principles, and unchristian doctrines, which are destructive of government, and so dissolve the very bonds of human society; as, that the king receives his power from the people, and is accountable to them for the exercise of it: that if he neglects his duty to them, they are not bound to perform theirs

theirs to him : for such doctrines are not only contrary to the word of God, and to the known laws of the land, but they directly tend to resisting the king, and disturbing the government, as this nation found by woful experience, when such principles as these led men on, by degrees, not only to rebelling against the king, but to the murdering of him too at his own gates. Wherefore, as ever you desire not to live in the breach of this known law, you must be sure to avoid such diabolical opinions as these are, and whatsoever else tends to the resisting or opposing the king in deed, in word, or thought ; for whatsoever doth so, is plainly repugnant to this divine command, whereby we are expressly commanded to *submit ourselves to every ordinance of man.*

BUT this non-resistance, although it be much, it is not all that is here requir'd of us : it is true, all that do any way resist the higher powers, plainly transgress this law ; but every one that doth not resist, cannot be therefore said to observe it ; for it is a positive command, *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man* : which submission necessarily supposeth not only our non-resistance, but likewise our assistance of them, to the utmost of our power ; as when any tumults or insurrections are raised against the king, every one is hereby obliged to assist the government in the suppressing of them, as much as he can, in the place and station he is in : for otherwise, although he doth not join with the rebels or rioters, he doth not join with the king against them, and so doth not perform this duty to him ; for every one is bound to defend the government under which he lives, that so he may live peaceably and quietly under it ; and therefore when it is opposed by restless and ill men, there can be no such thing as a neuter in the kingdom ; for he that is not for the government is against it, and contributes to the destruction of it, by not performing his duty, and so not using the means which God hath appointed for his support and preservation. Hence therefore all that would carry themselves as becometh christians in this case, must be as zealous for the government as others are against it, and make as much conscience of vindicating and defending it, as they do of resisting or setting themselves against it.

NEITHER is this all yet ; for when we are commanded to *submit ourselves to every ordinance of man*, we are thereby obliged also to submit to and observe those laws and ordinances which are established amongst us, by the government under which we live ; for he that doth not obey the king's laws, can never be said to submit to him, or to his authority, but rather to resist it. It is true, if any earthly prince command that which is contrary to the laws of God, the universal monarch of the world, in that case we must rather obey God than man. But blessed be God, that can never be our case, as things now stand ; for nothing, ye know, is passed into a law amongst us, but what hath been first agreed upon and consented to, not only by the temporal lords and commons, but by the bishops too, who ought, in reason and justice, to be supposed to understand the laws of God better than any private man can do. So that whatsoever laws are now in force amongst us, we may and ought to rest fully satisfied in our minds, that they are not repugnant to the word of God ; for if they had, they would have been abrogated before now.

NAY further, if there should happen a doubtful case, so that a man should have some reason to question, whether such a law be agreeable to the word of God, or no, in such a case it is the safest way to do what the law requires ; for though he may doubt, whether such a thing be agreeable to the word of God, or no, yet they that made the law did not doubt of it : for if they had, they would not have made it. And it must needs be the safest way to submit ourselves, in such a case, to those whom we cannot but acknowledge to be wiser than ourselves, even to the king and two houses of parliament, who doubtless would be as unwilling to command any thing contrary to God's word, as we can be to obey it.

BUT, as I observed before, we have no such laws, that a man can in reason doubt of, whether they be agreeable to the word of God, or no, and therefore
none

none but what we are bound to obey ; insomuch that whosoever wilfully refuseth to obey the laws of the land, plainly transgresses the laws of God, which command us to *submit ourselves to every ordinance of man* ; for there can be no true submission without obedience.

I heartily wish, that all who live in the constant neglect and violation of the known laws of the church and state under which they live, would duly consider this before it be too late, for it concerns their future state ; for almighty God, before whom they must ere long appear, will then judge them according to his own laws, whereof this is one, that we *submit ourselves to every ordinance of man*, in all such things which he hath left indifferent, and so to be determin'd by those whom he hath empowered to do it, according as the circumstances of time and place require. And they who live and die in a wilful omission of, or opposition against this divine law, live and die in a known sin ; and what will be the consequence of that, I leave it to themselves to judge. Be sure all that would *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*, must take as much care of this as of any other duty whatsoever, even to *submit themselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*.

FOR the Lord's sake ; which is the last thing to be explained. How for the Lord's sake ? the Phrase imports ;

1. THAT it is not enough to submit ourselves in general, but we must do it in obedience to the Lord *Jehovah*, the *king of all kings*, and the *governor of all things*. As in all the rest of God's commands, we must not only do what he hath commanded, but we must therefore do it, because he hath commanded it. So here, we must not only submit ourselves to *every ordinance of man*, but we must do it *for the Lord's sake*, even because the Lord of hosts himself hath commanded us to do it. So that every act of obedience to the king ought to be done in obedience to God, it being indeed due to him, not only for his own sake, but, as the apostle here speaks, *for the Lord's sake*, who is his king and governor, as he is ours. It is the authority of the most high God, that is the ground of our obligation to obey this, as well as any other command whatsoever ; and therefore they who do not obey this command, whatsoever they pretend, do not observe any of God's commands at all as they ought to do. For he that observes any of his commands, because they are his, cannot but observe this too, as being his command as well as any other.

FROM whence we may observe, that all that zeal for God that was pretended in the late rebellion against the king, was nothing else but hypocrisy and deceit : for if it had been true zeal for God, it would have kept them within the bounds of their duty to the king. If they had done any thing *for the Lord's sake*, as they pretended, they would have submitted to the king too *for the Lord's sake*, as they were expressly commanded by the Lord himself : but seeing, instead of that, they rebelled against him, they fought him, they imprisoned him, they murdered him, it is plain, they were acted all along with a spirit of delusion, and hurried about by the prince of darkness, in the shape of an angel of light.

2. WE must do it *for the Lord's sake*, that is, for the honour and glory of his great name, to which nothing contributes more than the meekness, patience, and peaceableness of those who profess the religion that our Lord Christ hath established in the world : because it shews the great power and force that his religion hath upon the minds of men, to keep their passions in order, and to make them loyal and submissive to their prince, as well as just and charitable to one another. Whereas if they who call themselves christians should be heady and high-minded, traitors and rebels against their king, and disturb the peace of the country where they live, this would reflect mightily upon our Lord, as if he had established a religion in the world, which turned all things upside-down, wheresoever it came. For ignorant and foolish men, as the greatest part of mankind are, will be apt to impute all the miscarriages of those who profess the christian religion,

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to the religion they profess. This is the reason that the apostle here gives, why this command should be so religiously observed: *for so, saith he, is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, ver. 15. that is, God is pleased so strictly to command you to *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man*, that so, by this means, you may stop the mouths of those who would otherwise upbraid you for a company of turbulent and factious people, and charge your religion with being the cause of riots and tumults in the state, which would be a mighty dishonour to our Lord himself. And therefore you must needs be subject for his sake.

AND verily, how great a blemish it is to any religion, for the professors of it to be seditious and troublesome to the state, the sad occasions of our present meeting is too clear an instance; for certainly that which struck off the king's head (I dread to speak it) was the greatest blow that was ever given either to the protestant religion in particular, or the christian in general, the enemies of our Lord taking occasion from thence to blaspheme his most holy name, especially such as either could not or would not distinguish betwixt those who only called themselves protestants, or christians, and such as were really so; for it is plain, that they, who engaged in the late rebellion, especially they that embued their hands in the blood of their sovereign, were so far from being protestants, so far from being christians, that they were of no religion at all, but a company of profligate atheistical wretches, who, under the pretence of the christian, endeavoured to root out the sense of all religion from among us, committing such villanies, as the very *Turks* and heathens might blush to hear of, as being a shame to mankind in general. Yet, nevertheless, all these notorious outrages, by whomsoever committed, were still fathered upon our most holy religion, to the great dishonour of our Lord, who hath settled it amongst us: for whose sake therefore it behoves us not only to submit ourselves, but to do all we can, that all among us may, for the future, do so, and so make up, if possible, the honour that our religion hath lost in the rebellion against the father, by our steady submission and allegiance to his son, out of sincere obedience to God's command, and for the glory of his great name; or, as it is here expressed, *for the Lord's sake*.

By this therefore you may see what *St. Paul* means, when he saith, *you must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake*, Rom. xiii. 5. that is, you must needs be submissive and obedient to the king, and higher powers, not only for fear of wrath and punishment, but out of a sense of your duty to God, and for the honour of his name; and to make as much conscience of this, as ye do of any other duty whatsoever, either to God or man, so as to be as fearful of resisting or rebelling against the king, or doing any thing that looks that way, as ye are, or ought to be, of theft, robbery, murder, or any other wickedness whatsoever. And the reason is, because that God hath plainly commanded you to be subject, and hath told you, that *whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation*, Rom. xiii. 2. For from hence it appears, that as theft, robbery, murder, or the like, so resistance of the king is a damnable sin: so that whosoever have been, or still are guilty of it, without repentance, they will certainly be damned for it: he by whom they shall be judged hath told them so before-hand, and therefore they may believe him.

THUS now I have given you the true sense and meaning of this command, which the most high God hath laid upon you, and shewn how necessary it is, that you punctually and religiously observe it *for the Lord's sake*. From whence you may all see, how much it concerns those who have had any hand in this, or any other rebellion or conspiracy against the king, to repent of it, before it be too late, for their eternal welfare depends upon it. Wherefore if there be any such amongst you, as I fear there are, you must give me leave to deal plainly and faithfully with you, as becometh a minister of Christ to do.

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YOU have now heard how positively the most high God hath commanded you to submit yourselves to those whom he hath set over you, for his sake. And you cannot but be conscious to yourselves how grievously you have offended against this divine law, by resisting, rebelling, and conspiring against the king, and so contributing towards his death and murder. Let me therefore ask you, in the name of God, where were your consciences ye so much talk'd of all this while, that they did not fly in your faces for so horrid a sin? how, were you not afraid to stretch forth your hands to destroy the Lord's anointed? or to raise or promote a rebellion against him? When *David* had but cut off the skirt of *Saul's* garment, it is said his heart smote him, his conscience checked him for it, and made him cry out, saying, *the Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 5, 6. And if *David's* conscience troubled him so much for cutting off a king's skirt, what shall we think of those who cut off their King's head? certainly, if their consciences were like *David's*, they would be so wrack'd and tormented in their minds, that they would not be able to endure themselves. And if you, who were any way accessory to it, would but rouse up your consciences out of that dead sleep they have been in so long, you will find matter enough of grief and sorrow as long as you live.

BUT I hope I need not insist any longer upon this ungrateful, though necessary, subject; for my charity prompts me to believe, that by this time your eyes are all open'd, so that you are truly sensible of, and sorry for your sin, and desire so to repent of it, that God may pardon it. For which purpose I must advise you not to think it enough to humble yourselves, as you do this day, at the remembrance of it, but make it your constant care and study, for the future, to avoid all appearance of rebellion, and to make as much conscience of being submissive, loyal, and obedient to the king, as ye do, or ought to do, of being just and charitable to other men, there being the same obligation upon you for the one, as for the other. Neither is this a duty incumbent only upon some of you, but upon all and every person in the congregation, you are all equally obliged to *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*. And therefore I beseech you, for the future, to be constant and conscientious in the doing of it: and for that end have a special care to avoid those ways and methods that the devil useth, whereby to draw men into treason and rebellion; especially take heed of schism and separation from the church, for that is the ready and common road to resistance and sedition against the state, as we have found by woful experience for above these forty years together. All the plots and treasons, the conspiracies and rebellions, that this kingdom hath been so much harassed and infested with all this while, have been hatched and carried on by those who have separated themselves from the communion of our church and religion establish'd amongst us, either papists or sectaries. Whereas it is notorious to all the world, that they that have continued real members of our church, have been all along as faithful subjects to the crown. And it is no wonder, for indeed they cannot be otherwise if they would! for the spirit that runs through Christ's catholick church, and, by consequence, through ours, puts all the sound members of it upon universal obedience to all the commands of God; and so to this, among the rest, of honouring the king, and submitting themselves to the higher powers. Hence it is, that as we never heard of any rebels in the primitive church, so neither are there, nor can be any such amongst those who are really of ours; which is the great glory of our church, and an undeniable argument of its apostolical constitution: and that which, if it was duly considered, would make all the christian princes in the world endeavour to reform the churches seated in their dominions, according to her pattern and example; and to protect them too, when they are so reformed, if it was for nothing else but to keep their kingdoms quiet, and free from disturbance and tumults. This our late most gracious sovereign was so sensible of, that he chose rather to part with his crown and life too, than ever consent to the ruin and destruction of such a church, which contributed so much to the peace of his kingdoms, as well as to the salvation of his subjects; and therefore died a real, a royal martyr in the defence of it.

IT is his death and martyrdom we this day commemorate, and have been now considering how to prevent that vengeance which is due to the nation for it. For which purpose I have shewn, that it is necessary to repent, not only of the fact itself, but likewise of the sins which caused it, and to avoid and abhor them for the future, so as sincerely to perform the contrary duties of submission and obedience to the king and governors. There may be some, I fear, among you who, having given me the hearing, will concern themselves no more about what they have heard, but will be ready to catch at all opportunities they can of running into the same sins again. To them I shall say no more at present, but leave them to him, who hath told them before-hand what they must expect from him, in plain *English*, damnation.

BUT as for all such amongst you as do not care to be damned, but desire in good earnest to go to heaven, and for that end to perform sincere obedience to all the commands of God, now you have heard how strictly he hath commanded you to *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*, for his sake I beseech you to act accordingly.

BREAK off this and all your sins by *righteousness*, and your iniquities by *shewing mercy to the poor*. *Fear God*, and honour the king, and meddle no more with them that are given to change. Study to be quiet, and to mind your own business, and concern yourselves no further about your superiors, than to perform your duty to them, as God hath commanded. Suffer not the devil or his agents to seduce you into plots or conspiracies against the king, nor to conceal any that you know to be framed against him. But be as loyal to his person, as tender of his honour, as submissive to his authority, as obedient to his commands, as you desire almighty God should be gracious and merciful to your immortal souls. Would you, and all the people of this kingdom, do thus, we should then have some ground to hope, that the most high God would pardon the horrid and crying sin that was this day committed, which we humbly beseech him to do for Christ Jesus sake: *To whom with the Father, &c.*

S E R M O N CXXIX.

The Golden Rule of Equity.

M A T T. vii. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets.

ALTHOUGH in this world, as the wise man observed, *all things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked* ; to him that feareth God, and to him that feareth him not : yea, the things of this world are generally so dispensed, that the best men have the most of the troubles, and the worst usually the most of the pleasures of it, so that there is no knowing vice from virtue by its outward garb and condition here ; yet it is not so in the other world which is appointed for man to live in : for there vice shall have its condign punishments, and virtue its just rewards ; so that there shall be as great a difference betwixt saints and sinners in their estate and condition, as there is in their temper and inclinations ; the one being advanced as high in happiness, and the other depressed as low in misery, as it is possible for them to be. And the reason is, because as men go from this into the other world, they must pass thro' the fiery trial, and under a strict examination at the tribunal of the most high God, where the secrets of all hearts are disclosed, and all mens lives are reviewed, and all their actions looked over again, and examined by the exactest rules of justice : and according as men are there found to have carried themselves whilst they were on earth, they are presently adjudged to their eternal habitations. If it be there found upon trial, that they have performed their duty both to God and man, as they ought to do, then, in and through the merits of Jesus Christ, they have all happiness and honour imaginable conferred upon them. But if they be there found to have mispent their time, imbezled their talents, and neglected their duty either to their great creator, or their fellow-creatures, whilst they were upon earth, for a just recompence of reward, they are condemned to eternal misery and torment.

Now it will not, it cannot be long, before you and I must all stand before this tribunal, and there give up our accounts before the great and all-wise judge of heaven and earth. But blessed be his glorious name for it, there is none of us but as yet may so prepare ourselves for it, as to come off with joy and comfort at that day. For he that then will be our judge, as yet proffers to be our advocate, yea, and our saviour too : and he hath made that provision for us, and given such directions to us, how to prevent our condemnation at that time, that it is nothing but our own folly and madness that can make us subject to it. For he having in our natures undergone the curse of the law, and suffered that death which was due to us, hath thereby put us into a capacity of avoiding it ; which we may all do, if we will but perform the conditions which he requires in his gospel, in order to it ; which are only to repent of our former sins, and sincerely endeavour unto the utmost of our power, for the future, to perform our duty, both

to God, and man. And when we have done all, trust and depend only upon him for the pardon of our sins, and defects in duty, and for the acceptance both of our persons and performances before God. And that there might be nothing wanting on his part to make us happy, he hath with his own mouth most clearly discovered to us the several duties both to God and man, which at the day of judgment he will proceed chiefly upon, and search narrowly into, whether we have used the utmost of our power and skill to perform them aright or no.

As to the most high God; our blessed Saviour hath fore-warned us, *to love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our might, and with all our mind*, Matth. xxii. 37. *to fear him*, and none but him, Matth. x. 28. *to believe and trust on him*, John xiv. 1. *to seek his kingdom, and the righteousness thereof in the first place*, Matth. vi. 33. and *to worship him in spirit and in truth*, John iv. 24. and the like.

AND as to men, he hath enjoined *not to judge others*, Matth. vii. 1. *not to be angry or passionate with one another, especially without a just cause*, Matth. v. 22. but *to love one another as he hath loved us*, Joh. xv. 12. yea, *to love our very enemies*, Matth. v. 44. *to be obedient to magistrates*, Matth. xxii. 21. *to be charitable to the poor*, Matth. v. 42. chap. xxv. 35. *to be just and righteous unto all*, Matth. v. 20. Indeed, whatsoever duty it is that we owe to one another, he hath some where or other in his gospel most clearly described it to us. And that we may always keep ourselves within the bounds of equity and justice, he hath given us here in the words of my text a short and comprehensive rule, easy to be kept always in our minds, whereby to order all our actions towards one another, saying, *therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets*.

WHICH words we must not look upon only as containing good advice, and wholesome counsel and direction for the ordering of our lives and conversations, but we are to esteem them to be what really they are, even an express command which Christ enjoins all his disciples punctually to observe, as the standard of all our civil actions; and that whereby he will examine and weigh them all at the day of judgment. So that all our actions to one another shall be either approved of, or condemned, according as they are, or are not conformable to this rule. For this, our saviour himself here tells us, *is the law and the prophets*; that is, not only as some would have it, what the law and the prophets teach, but it is the sum and substance of whatsoever is required in the law and prophets, as to our carriage and behaviour to each other; it being the same, in effect, with that general precept of the law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*, Levit. xix. 18. which St. Paul tells us, *is the fulfilling of the law*, Rom. xiii. 8, 9. that is, the second table of the law, or so far as it respects our duty to our neighbour. And so our saviour himself elsewhere saith, that all the law and the prophets hang upon these two commandments, *thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thy self*, Matth. xxii. 40. So that as all the duties which we owe to God are comprized under our loving him above all things, so whatsoever it is that we are bound to perform unto our neighbour, is briefly comprehended in our loving him as ourselves; which it is impossible for us to express any other ways, than by doing unto others whatsoever we would that they should do to us. For if I love my neighbour as myself, I cannot but desire the same good things for him which I do for myself. And if I desire the same good things for my neighbour which I do for myself, I must needs do to him whatsoever I would that he should do to me; for I would that he should do all the good he can for me; and unless I do the same to him, I do not desire his good as I do mine own, nor by consequence love him as myself. And therefore Justin Martyr long ago observed, that *ὁ τὸν πλησίον ὡς ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπῶν, ἅπερ αὐτῷ βέλῃται ἀγαθὰ, καὶ αὐτῷ βελήσεται*, *He that loves his neighbour as himself, the same good things which he wills unto himself, he wills them also to his neighbour*. But all men in the world are to be reckoned as our neighbours, whom by consequence we are to love as we do ourselves, and do to them as we would have them do to us. But ourselves would willingly be hurt by none, but be done good to by all; and therefore if we follow this rule, we shall neither do any hurt unto others, nor neglect any good which we can do for them; and by consequence must needs fulfil all the moral law as it respects our neighbour. And hence it is that our saviour saith, that

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this is the law and the prophets ; because there is no duty which we owe unto our neighbour, but it may be referred to, and is really comprized under this one general rule, which St. *Hierom* therefore rightly calls, *totius justitiæ breviarium*, an abstract or compendium of all justice and equity. And before him, *Lactantius* to the same purpose said, *radix justitiæ & omne fundamentum æquitatis est illud, ut ne facias ulli, quod pati nolis ; sed alterius animum de tuo metiaris* : the root of justice, and the whole foundation of equity is this, that thou dost not do what thou wouldst not suffer, but measure another's mind by thine own. So as still to remember, that what thou thinkest to be evil for thee, another thinks to be evil to him ; and therefore thou shouldst not do that to him, which thou wouldst not he should do to thee.

THIS therefore being so excellent and comprehensive a duty, that according to our blessed saviour's own assertion it contains whatsoever either the law or prophets require of us to one another, there is none of us, that truly mind our future happiness, but must needs be very desirous clearly to understand the full meaning and purport of it ; especially considering how great an help it will be in all our civil actions to one another, that if we do but still walk according to this one short rule rightly understood, we cannot fail in our conversing with one another, but shall still perform to one another whatsoever the law or prophets, I may say the gospel too, requires to be performed by us ; yea, so as that we may know within ourselves, and in our own consciences, whether we do good or evil to our neighbour, by considering whether it be according to what we would have done unto ourselves, or no ; and so pass judgment upon our own actions, and upon what we do to others, only by observing our own will, and what we would have others do to us, and so we may be a law unto ourselves, as the apostle saith the *Gentiles* were, *Rom. ii. 14.* which that you may all be, by the right understanding and using of this rule, I shall endeavour to give you the true sense and notion of it, which is not so easily done as said, there being more in it than we commonly are aware of, insomuch, that though it be an ordinary saying among us, *Do as ye would be done by*, yet I fear it is not so generally and truly understood as it ought to be, nor so easy to be explain'd, as it may seem at first sight, by reason of its extent and comprehensiveness : howsoever I shall endeavour to explain it as fully and clearly as I can, first, by opening the true meaning of the words in general ; and secondly, by shewing how they are to be applied to our particular actions.

As for the *first*, though the words be but few, they are very significant, every one, as well as all, having its weight, and therefore deserving to be considered apart, in order to the right understanding of the whole ; and therefore I shall take them in order as they lie. But the particle *ἐν* therefore, whether it infer these from the preceding words, as St. *Chrysostom* expounds it, or be redundant here as others would have it, it not being any ways material to the true meaning of the words, I shall pass it by, and begin with these words, *all things whatsoever ye would*. Which words must be understood with caution, otherwise they may be perverted to a bad sense, and a wrong use made of this excellent and divine rule ; for our wills being corrupt, we may sometimes will what is evil to ourselves, and by consequence think ourselves bound to do the same to our neighbour. As for example, a man that doth not much care for being a rational creature, and therefore delights to be some time deprived of the use of his reason by intoxicating liquors, he desires that others would make him drunk, and therefore, according to this rule misunderstood, he must make them so too ; for he must do to them as he would have them do to him. But this is an horrible perversion of the rule ; to prevent which, St. *Augustine* observes, that in the old *Latin* translation used in his time, the word *bona* was put in, and the words read, *omnia quæcunque vultis ut faciant vobis homines bona* ; all good things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you. And, long before St. *Augustine*, St. *Cyprian* reads the words so too, and doubtless this is the true meaning of them. But there is no necessity of making any addition to the *Greek* text, or our translation of it, to make it bear this sense ; for when our saviour here saith, *Πάντα ἐν ὅσα ἂν θέλητε*, *all things whatsoever you would* : he is plainly to be understood of all such things only which men can properly be said to will. But as St. *Augustine* again observes, *voluntas non est nisi in bonis*, we properly will only what is good, evil not being the object of our will,

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but only of our lust. Or howsoever, our saviour here supposes that our wills be so regulated by the principles or dictates of reason and religion, that we will nothing to ourselves but what is just in itself, and good for us. And what we thus will that men should do to us, we are also bound to do to them, according to this rule of our saviour. And therefore the *Persian* translation gives us the true meaning of these words, rendring them by, *whatsoever you think it just and equitable that men should do to you, do ye even the same to them.*

Now the true meaning of these first words of this rule or canon being thus stated, we may see into the falshood not only of the former, but likewise of many other conclusions which may be drawn from this rule falsely interpreted, as proceeding mostly from the mistake of these first words of it. For seeing our saviour's saying, *all things whatsoever ye would*, is not to be understood of such things as our corrupt and depraved wills lust after, but only of such things as our wills, guided by right reason and true religion, chuse as really good for us; hence it follows, that whatsoever we will unreasonably or unjustly to ourselves, we cannot be bound by this rule to do the same to others, as being bound beforehand not to do it. As for instance; a judge sitting upon the bench, hath a malefactor convicted of some capital crime standing at the bar before him, upon whom he is ready to pass sentence of death according as he hath justly deserved; but before he pronounceth the sentence, he bethinks himself of this rule, whereby he is bound to do to the prisoner, as he would have the prisoner do to him, supposing he himself was at the bar in the prisoner's condition, and the prisoner upon the bench with his commission; and considers, that if he was the prisoner, he would willingly be releas'd, and therefore thinks that by this rule he is obliged to release the prisoner. But this doth not at all follow from this rule, not only because the judge is pre-obliged to act according to law and justice, but also because the prisoner cannot in reason and justice will to be released, as being pre-supposed to have justly deserved death, and so cannot without injustice, or at least without the obstruction of justice, be released from it; though thus far questionless the judge is bound by this rule, even to be as just to the prisoner in his cause, as he would the prisoner should be to him, was he in the prisoner's, and the prisoner in his place.

ANOTHER instance may make the thing still plainer: supposing, any of you being walking in the streets, there comes an indigent person to you, and desires you to give him an hundred pounds: you deny; but he pleads this rule, saying, if you wanted as much as I, and I had as much as you, you would desire that I should give you so much, and therefore you ought to give me so much; for what you would that others should do to you, you should do the same to them. But now this doth not follow at all; for although if you was in his condition, and he in yours, you might probably desire as much of him, as he desires of you, yet your desires to him would be unreasonable, and so are his to you: for we suppose he hath no absolute necessity of so much money, and therefore he cannot so properly be said to will, as to covet it, his desire of so much proceeding from his corrupt inclination to the things of this world. But supposing a man to be in such circumstances that he is certain to starve, without your supplying him with so much as he hath absolute necessity of; here the rule holds good, so that you are bound to supply him by it; for if you was in his condition, and he in yours, you might justly and reasonably will that he should supply you; and by consequence you are obliged to supply him, because you are bound to *do to others, as you would that they should do to you*, in all things which your wills, regulated by the light of scripture and reason, choose.

THE next thing to be considered in my text, is the word [*men.*] *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you.* Men, not God: and men in general, as men, not as lying under such and such particular obligations to one another; for a father would have his children to obey him, but it doth not follow, that he must obey his children. A master would have his servants do his work, but he is not therefore bound to do theirs. A prince would have his subjects submit to him, but he is not therefore obliged to submit to them; because in those, and such like relations, there are particular obligations, which quite alter the case: for children are bound to obey their parents, servants their masters, and subjects their prince. But there is no such obligation on the other side, for a parent to obey his children, a master his servants, or a prince his subjects. And therefore, neither can they be obliged to it by this rule, which obligeth us no further than

than to perform our other obligations to one another. And so, though it doth not oblige a parent to obey his children, as he would have them to obey him, because there is no former obligation upon him to do it; yet it obligeth him to perform his duty as a father unto them, as well as them to perform their duty as children unto him; so that as he would that they should carry themselves as obedient children unto him, so is he bound by this rule to carry himself as a loving father unto them. The same may be said also of the other relations; but we must remember that this rule was intended for our carriage to one another, only as we are men; as we are all fellow-creatures and fellow-servants to the most high God; and therefore whatsoever other relation we may stand in to one another, take away that relation, and the rule is still to be universally observed. As suppose a servant to be sick, his sickness hath no relation to his service; and therefore in this case his master is to deal with him as with his fellow creature, and do to him as he would be done by, was he in his condition; because we are bound *to do to others what we would that men should do to us*. That is the next thing to be explain'd; for here, *by doing*, we are not to understand only external actions, or our outward carriage to one another, but likewise the inward motions of our hearts, even our thoughts and affections to each other; for though human laws take no cognisance of what we think of, or how we are affected to each other, yet the divine laws do: and therefore, as we would that men should perform their inward as well as outward duties unto us, so are we to do the same to them. Which brings me to the last words to be considered, *Do ye even so to them*. That is, unto the utmost of our power; for there are some cases, wherein it may be impossible for a man to do so to others, as he may in reason will that others should do to him; as a man that really wants what is necessary for his present sustenance, he may justly desire that others should relieve him, though his own necessity makes him incapable of relieving others, and takes off his obligation to do it; for no man can be bound to do that which in itself is impossible for him to do. And therefore this rule must still be understood with this caution, that it be in our power to do such things to others as we would have others do to us; which being supposed, *All things whatsoever we would that men should do to us, we are bound to do even so to them*. As also on the other side, as *Tertullian* observes, as you would not that men should do to you, so you must not do to them; or we must not do to others what we would not suffer ourselves.

THUS we have considered the several words and expressions apart by themselves, in which our saviour used to express this general and comprehensive duty to us; from whence it is easy to gather the true meaning and purport of the whole; which in few terms amounts to this, that all things whatsoever we do, or can in reason and justice will or desire that men, as they are our fellow creatures, should do either in thought or affection, in word or action for us, the same we are bound, unto the utmost of our skill and power, to do for them, even for all with whom we do converse. And whosoever doth thus, he fulfils and performs whatsoever the law or prophets require him to do to others; and by consequence, whosoever doth not observe this rule, inscribed first as the law of nature upon the hearts of all men, and afterwards transcribed by Christ himself into his gospel; I say, whosoever doth not observe this, transgresses all the moral law, so far as it respects our neighbour, and by necessary consequence as it respects God too, forasmuch as he lives in disobedience to his sacred and just commands; and so whosoever offends in this one point, breaks the whole law of God.

Now the several parts of this rule being thus explain'd, and so the true meaning of the whole found out, in the next place we are to consider how to apply it to our particular actions, and to make use of it in our whole life and conversation in this world; which I hope there is none of you but are very desirous to understand: forasmuch as if we fail in this, we fail in all things else. And if we observe this rule aright, we shall do whatsoever either the law written, or the prophets inspired by God, require of us, in reference to our civil converse with one another, as our saviour himself here intimates unto us. Hence it is that I have used all the care and caution that I could, in giving you the true and genuine sense of these words, and shall do the like in shewing you how to use them, hoping that by this time you do not only understand the general drift of them, but are likewise so convinced of the necessity of observing what our saviour drives at in them, that you are resolved, by his assistance, not only to keep them always

in your minds, but to use them upon all occasions whatsoever, to which they are any ways applicable. And let me tell you, there are no civil actions whatsoever betwixt man and man, but what should be ordered according to this rule; so that this is not a rule to be observed or made use of only now and then, but through the whole course of our lives, in all places and companies whatsoever. And it is that likewise which is always at hand; insomuch, that wheresoever you are, whatsoever you are about to do towards your neighbour, it is but turning your eyes inward, and there you may read the equity or injustice of it, only by considering whether you would be willing, all circumstances considered, that others should do that to you which you are about doing to them.

AND indeed this is the way whereby we are to apply this general rule to our particular actions, even by observing only which way our own wills are inclined, and ordering our carriage and behaviour towards others accordingly, so as not to do any thing to others, which we would that they should not do to us; and whatsoever we would that they should do to us, that we be sure to do the same to them. But seeing instancing in some particulars will conduce very much to your understanding how to apply this rule upon all occasions, I shall give you some examples both of what you would not, and what you would have done unto yourselves, by which you may clearly learn what you ought not, and what you ought to do to others.

FIRST therefore do but consult your own hearts, and you may easily find that you would not have others have a bad opinion, or think evil of you; but whatsoever you are in yourselves, I am sure you would all be thought to be good by others: whence it is easy to infer, that others also should be so esteemed by you; for as you would that others should think of you, so ought you to think of them. But you all would have others think well of you, and by consequence you are to think well of them too; which also is no more than what we are all bound in charity to do; for as the apostle tells us, *charity thinketh no evil*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. yea, it is our duty likewise to *honour all men*, 1 Pet. ii. 17. that is, to have a good esteem and respect for all men; not to undervalue or despise any man whatsoever, as we desire that others should not undervalue or despise us. And what a rare world would it be, was this rule observed but in this one particular? what evil surmises, fears, and jealousies should we be freed from; how kindly should we then *be affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another*, Rom. xii. 10. And verily, it is observable, that it is a breach of justice, as well as charity, not to observe this rule in this particular; for all men being made in the image of God, and designed to serve and enjoy him, we are bound to believe all men to be good, and to answer the end of the creation; yea, they have a right and title to our good thoughts and opinions of them, unless they have forfeited it, by being publicly convicted to be otherwise; even as our common law itself supposeth all men to be innocent of all crimes which they are not found to be guilty of, either by their own confession, or other proof, which are the true reasons why we are forbid to condemn others so much as in our very thoughts.

FOR in the next place there is none of you but would have others not believe all evil reports which may be raised of you; neither would you have your credit in the world, and your esteem amongst your neighbours impaired or lessened by such reports and surmises, as envy or malice may invent and spread abroad concerning you. Now therefore remember your saviour's rule; and as you would not that others should believe every thing that is said of you, so likewise do not you believe every thing that is said of others; neither let your opinion of, nor affection to your neighbour, be any ways abated by any flying reports, which you may hear of him. Because some sin in raising scandals upon others, do not you sin too in believing of them; but whatsoever ill may be said of any one, you must be sure to hope and believe the best of all, until you have good information of the truth of what is said.

FURTHERMORE, as you would not that others should believe the ill they may hear of you, so I am confident there is none of you but would that no man speak evil of you; you would all, if possible, have every one's good word: you would not have your ill deeds blazoned abroad, nor your good disparaged; nor yourselves judged or condemned by others behind your backs; insomuch, that I dare appeal unto your own consciences, whether it be not the real will and desire of every soul of you, not to be derided, scoffed at, reproached or backbited by others;

others; but to be well spoken of by all, and defended from such calumnies as may be thrown upon you.

CONSIDER therefore what you would have from others, and do the same to them. What you desire is but just and good; for God hath commanded, that no man speak evil of you. But he hath commanded too, that you speak evil of no man. Thus the apostle St. Paul charges Titus to put men in mind to *speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men*, Tit. iii. 2. And I desire you to observe the reason he giveth for this command laid down in the next words; for, saith he, *we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceitful, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another*, ver. 3. which reason, why we should not speak evil of any man, is certainly of force to us now, as much as ever it was to any. For though some of us may be good now, be sure we were not always so; for we were all born sinners, and are by nature the children of wrath as well as others, Ephes. ii. 3. Nay, we were not only born in sin, but every one that knows himself, and the plague of his own heart, must needs know himself to be a sinner still: neither is there any of you, but, I dare say, knows himself to be guilty of more sins than he can, or dare say, any man in the world besides himself is. And therefore whatsoever sins God may permit others to fall into, remember yourselves that you are not only subject to the like passions, but guilty of as great, if not greater sins. And, as our saviour said to them that brought the woman taken in adultery before him, *he that is without sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her*, Joh. viii. 7. So say I, when you hear of the sins which others have fallen into, let him that is without sin, cast contumelious reproaches upon them: but then I am sure none here present can do it, nor any man upon the face of the earth. For as the apostle tells us, *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*, Rom. iii. 23. And therefore, until yourselves are free from sin, do not you upbraid, or backbite others for it; for you would not have others do so to you. Remember your saviour's words, *Judge not, that you be not judged: and cast out the beam that is in your own eyes, before you talk of the mote that is in others*, Matt. vii. 1, 5. And remember this golden rule he hath given you in my text; and as you would not have others to talk against you, so neither do you talk against others behind their backs; but still observe this caution in your speaking of other men, even to speak of their virtues only behind their backs, and of their vices only before their faces.

IN the last place: you would not that men should deceive, injure, circumvent, or over-reach you in your civil commerce and dealing with one another; you would not have them use any tricks or artifices to blind your eyes, and cheat you in what you bargain for; you would have all men deal plainly, and aboveboard with you: though a man be too cunning for you, and able to deceive you, you would not have him do it; but would have him deal with you as he would desire to be dealt withal himself, was you in his condition and he in yours. Now bring this home unto yourselves; and do not you do to others what you would not have others do to you. Would you not have others lie to you? you then must not lie to others. Would you not have others over-reach you? then you must not over-reach others. Would you not have others defraud you? then do not you defraud others. So saith the apostle, *let no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter*, 1 Thes. iv. 6. And verily would you in all your civil contracts observe this rule as near and exactly as possible you can, so as always to deal with others as you would have others deal with you, it would not only prevent many of those sins which you are liable to, if not guilty of each day; but it would be a sovereign means too to bring a blessing upon your estates and families, and to keep your consciences void of offence both towards God and man; that when you come to lie upon your death-beds, the remembrance of your former sins may not be a greater torment to you, than ever the profit you received by them was a pleasure; but you may be able then to reflect with joy and comfort, even upon your dealings in the world, and say, that to the utmost of your power and knowledge you have always done to others, as you desired that others should do to you.

BUT to this end it is necessary, not only that you do not to others what you would not have others do to you, but likewise on the other side, *that whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, you do even so to them*. As for example, none of you but may sometimes have done some wrong or injury to your neighbours,
for

for which they may be justly angry and displeased with you, and may think of revenging themselves upon you for it: now, in this case, I know you would have such persons forgive all such wrongs, which they may have received from you; and to lay aside all thoughts of revenge, all hatred and malice against you, and to receive you into their favour, as much as if you had never been out of it. Now lay your hands upon your hearts, and do as you would be done by; as you would have others pardon the wrongs that you have committed against them, so do you forgive the injuries which others have committed against you: for thus you are commanded too in plain terms, even to *forbear one another*, and to *forgive one another, if any man hath a quarrel against another*, Colos. iii. 13. And if there was no express command at all for it, yet this general rule, prescribed by our saviour himself, doth sufficiently enjoin us to forgive all affronts, abuses, or injuries, that we have received from any man.

As also in the next place to love all: for if you do but know your own hearts, you must needs acknowledge, that every one of you would willingly be loved by all; you would have no enemies in the world, but would have your very foes become your friends, and your adversaries to love you: for as we love ourselves, we cannot but desire to be beloved by others. Here therefore you may see the reasonableness of that command of our blessed saviour, *love y. ur enemies*, Matth. v. 44. for it is no more than what we would have our enemies do to us; and by consequence we ought to do so unto them. Whatsoever enemies any of you may have in the world, you would not have them continue so, but become your friends, and love you as much as they hated you before. Now by what you would have them do to you, you may easily gather what you are bound to do to them, even to love them, as you desire they should love you; and become their friends, as you would have them become yours. So that whosoever retains any malice or enmity against another, lives in the breach of this law of our blessed saviour; for he doth not to others, as he would have others do to him.

FURTHERMORE, as you would have the love of all, so you would willingly have all men to express their love unto you, not only in words, but deeds; by praying for you, by rejoicing and grieving with you; by discovering any mischief they know designed against you; by assisting you in your troubles; by congratulating your prosperity; by relieving you in your necessities; by keeping all the evil from you, and doing all the good unto you, that they can. These are the ways whereby you would all have your neighbours express their love and kindness to you. Now remember your saviour's command; and as *ye would that they should do to you, do ye even the same to them*. Would you have them pray for you? then you must pray for them, 1 Tim. ii. 1. Would you have them rejoice and grieve with you, so as to be glad at your welfare, and troubled for your troubles? then you must rejoice and grieve with them, Rom. xii. 15. Would you have them be assistant unto you upon all occasions? then you must be so to them. Would you have them help and relieve you in your necessities? then you must do the like for them in theirs. In a word; would you have others do what good they can for you? then you are bound by this rule to do what good you can for others. Your Lord and master here expressly enjoining you to do to others *whatsoever ye would that others should do to you*.

IN the next place, if you consult yourselves, you may easily find your wills inclined to receive from all men whatsoever they owe, or are indebted to you, either by the law of God, or civil contracts. You would have all men pay you that respect and honour which may be due to your dignity or condition in the world. If any one hath obliged himself by promise or contract to pay you such a sum of money at such a time, you would have him be faithful and punctual in the performance of it. Such things as these are, you all know, in your own consciences, you are willing and desirous that all persons should do to you; and consequently cannot but know yourselves to be obliged by this rule, to do the same to them: as also by the express command, *Render therefore to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, honour to whom honour, fear to whom fear. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*, Rom. xiii. 7, 8. which is but a particular branch of this general duty, whereby we are bound to do to others, as we would have others do to us.

I SHALL instance only one thing more, which though it be rarely practised, or so much as thought of, yet it is of necessary consequence from this rule, and there-

therefore necessary to be observed by us; and that is this: I suppose there is none here present, but having had dealings in the world, you have some times suffered loss in it, not only by the providence of God, but likewise by the wickedness of men; who either by open violence, or secret theft, or at least by cheating and couzenage, have got some part of your estates into their possession, and converted it to their own use. Now although I believe there is none of you, but some time or other have been thus unjustly deprived of some part of your earthly enjoyments, yet, I dare say, there is none of you but would willingly have restored to you again whatsoever hath been thus unjustly taken from you: and you may lawfully desire it; for this is not coveting another man's goods, but only desiring to have your own restored to you. Your own, I say; for so they still are, though they be got into the other's possession, as much as when they were in your own: he who hath them having then no more right or title to them than he had before he had them; for another's sin cannot take away my right. And therefore whosoever by any unlawful means hath gotten any thing from you, although he hath it in his possession, it is still as much yours, as it was before you lost it; and therefore the right being still in you, you may lawfully desire to be repossessed of it.

HERE, therefore, let me desire you once again to bethink yourselves, and consider, whether you have not by some unlawful means, or other, as perjury, lying, couzenage, or the like, gotten some of your neighbours goods into your possession, and perhaps used them too for a good while. I accuse none, but only desire that every one would consult his own conscience in the case: and if, upon a diligent search and scrutiny, you find that you have any thing in your possession, which you came not lawfully by, give me leave to tell you, that it is none of yours; and you are bound to make restitution of it to its proper owner, from whom you got it, upon this very account, because you are bound to *do to others, as you would that others should do to you*: for I am confident there is none of you, but would have others make restitution of what they have gotten wrongfully from you: and therefore there is all the reason in the world, that you should make restitution of what you have gotten wrongfully from others; which also is no more than what the law itself doth absolutely require of you, *Levit. vi. 2, 3, 4, 5.*

THERE are many other instances I might give of the use you are to make of this excellent rule prescribed by our blessed saviour; but these may suffice to shew you the way how to apply it to your particular actions, and civil converse with one another. And would you but begin with these particulars which I have already instanced in, all the rest would follow in course. And there is no duty that you owe to one another, but you would soon perform it. Therefore let me desire you to set upon the practice of what you have heard at this time. First, do not you do that to any, which you would not that any should do to you; you would not that others should think ill of you; you would not that others should believe all the ill they hear concerning you, nor speak evil of you, nor injure, deceive or over-reach you in any thing; and therefore do not you do any such thing to others. And on the other side, as you would that others should forgive the wrongs that you have done them; that others should love you, and that they should express their love unto you by doing you what good they can; and that others should pay what they owe you, and restore unto you whatsoever they have unjustly taken from you; as you would that others should do these things to you, so must you be sure to do the same to them without any collusion or equivocation whatsoever; which would you all be persuaded to do, how happily should we live together? then there would be no such things as jars and tumults, no strifes and contentions, no discord or malice, no complaints of fraud and injustice; nothing but peace and concord, mutual love and amity amongst us; striving about nothing but who should be most pious to God, and most helpful and good to one another. This would be to live like christians indeed: which that you may all do, let me beseech you in the name of Christ that came into the world to save you, that you would always carry this divine rule in your minds, which he hath been pleased to prescribe unto you, and endeavour to adjust all your civil actions and conversations with one another to it; as remembering that he who hath commanded you to observe this rule, ere long will examine whether you have observed it or no, and judge you according to it. And if any of you shall still presume to live in the constant neglect of it, be it known unto you, it is not long but you will stand before his tribunal, who hath enjoined it; and then you

will wish that you had taken my advice, or rather obeyed his command in observing it. Whereas, if by the blessing and assistance of God you shall for the future, unto the utmost of your power, do to all others as you would that others should do to you ; Christ, who hath commanded you to do it, cannot but be well pleased with you for doing it ; and therefore will say unto you, *well done, good and faithful servants, enter into your master's joy.*

S E R M O N CXXX.

The Worthy Communicant.

I COR. XI. 29.

Ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων, καὶ πίνων ἀναξίως, ἡρῆμα ἑαυτοῦ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει, μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα τοῦ κυρίου.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

THERE being no name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved, but only the name of Christ ; and there being no way to be saved by him neither, without believing on him ; hence man was no sooner fallen, but presently Christ was promised, and so made the object of his faith. Which promise being made to *Adam*, and so to man in general, all mankind were equally obliged and concerned both firmly to believe it, and also to express and exercise this their faith in their promised saviour, by their frequent sacrificing of beasts to God, as types of that grand sacrifice which he was to offer for them. But, some time after, God having out of all the kindreds of the earth pitch'd upon *Abraham* for the person out of whose loins this his son our saviour should be born ; he for that reason chose *Abraham's* posterity to be his own peculiar people, as being more nearly related to him in blood ; to whom therefore he renewed and explained the foresaid promise more fully and clearly than to the rest of mankind. And to put them constantly in mind of what his son was to suffer for them, and so to strengthen and confirm their faith in his blood, he required them to slay and sacrifice some kind of beasts or other every day unto him, as types and representatives of it. And having in a wonderful manner delivered them from the *Egyptian* bondage, wherein they had been detained many years, and thereby signified to them that eternal redemption which he designed for them, he enjoined them to commemorate the said deliverance once every year, by slaying, roasting, and eating a lamb in every family ; which was so ordered, that almost every circumstance in it represented some thing or other of what Christ was to suffer afterwards, as well as what God had before done for them : yea, the very manner of his death was plainly typified by it. For the *Jews* themselves acknowledge that the lamb was always roasted in such a posture, as to represent a person hanging upon a cross.

Now when the fulness of time was come, God, according to his promise, sent his son into the world ; who having for several years together conversed with mankind in their own nature, and taught them whatsoever was necessary for them to believe or do, in order to their obtaining eternal salvation by him ; and being now ready to offer up himself as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, the same

same night wherein he was betrayed in order thereunto, he, according to custom, eat the passover, or lamb before spoken of, with his disciples: and as they were eating, *he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, take eat: this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.* As likewise after supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, *drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

THESE words our saviour spake in the Syriack tongue, wherein there is no word that signifies *to signify*; but whensoever they would say, this signifies such a thing, they always used to say, *this is such a thing.* And therefore the apostles, to whom these words were spoken, could not but understand them according to the common way of speaking then in use among them; and so apprehend our saviour's meaning to be, as if he should have said, the paschal lamb, which we are now eating, hath hitherto, as ye know, typified the promised Messiah, *the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.* I am that Messiah or Christ, that lamb of God, who am now ready to offer up myself for the sins of the world: and therefore this and all other sacrifices, being only types of mine, are now to cease in course. But that you, as well as your forefathers, may always have some thing to put you in mind of me, and of my death, which I am to suffer for you; behold, I now institute this sacrament in lieu of all other bloody sacrifices whatsoever: so that as this paschal lamb which we are now eating (and so all other bloody sacrifices) hath hitherto represented my death and passion to you; so from this time forward that which I have now done shall do it. For bread thus taken, and blessed, and broken, and distributed, as ye see me do it, is now, and ever hereafter shall be my body, in the same sense as this paschal lamb hath hitherto been my body. And so also for the cup: wine thus blessed, as you have seen me do it, is my blood, and shall be so to the end of the world, as really as the blood of the paschal lamb, or other sacrifices, hath been so till this time.

THIS seems to me so plainly to be the proper and natural meaning of our blessed saviour in those words, that as I do not question but the apostles understood them in this sense, so I cannot but wonder how it came into mens minds at first to put any other meaning upon them; especially that the papists should wrest them to such a sense, or rather nonsense, as to ground their absurd doctrine of transubstantiation upon them; a doctrine never heard of, much less believed in the primitive times.

BUT not to insist upon that now. It is further to be observed in these words, that altho' our Lord doth expressly command his disciples to do this in remembrance of him, yet he doth not prescribe them any set times wherein to do it, nor acquaint them how oft he would have it done; only in the institution of the cup he intimates, that he would have them do it often, saying, *Do this, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.* And as the Jews, as oft as they offered any bloody sacrifices, foreshewed the Lord's death until his first coming; so christians, as the apostle tells us, *as oft as they eat this bread, and drink this cup, they shew forth the Lord's death 'till his coming again,* 1 Cor. xi. 26. But still there is no precise time or times prescribed for doing it by Christ or his apostles: neither was it proper or convenient there should be. For if there had, there would have been an indispensable necessity laid upon all Christians to do it at all such times, whereas some christians may at some times be in such places, and under such circumstances, that it may be morally impossible for them to do it.

BUT how then shall we know how often we are bound to receive this holy sacrament? there are two ways to know it: from the practice of the holy apostles and primitive christians; and then from the reason of the thing, and the end of the institution.

First, WE find the holy apostles, who perfectly understood our Lord's mind, administering and receiving this holy sacrament whensoever they met together upon a religious account; yea, so as that it seems to have been the principal end of their meeting, especially upon the Lord's day: for it is written, that *upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow,* Acts xx. 7. From whence we may observe, that they received this sacrament at least every first day of the week, which is the Lord's day; and that the main end of their meeting upon that day

was

was not to hear sermons, but to break bread ; only the apostle being to depart on the morrow, took that occasion of preaching to them. And the same custom obtained, not only in the apostles times, but for many ages after ; so that the primitive christians looked upon this sacrament as the chief part of their publick devotions ; infomuch that they never held any religious assemblies, without the celebration of it ; and if any one went away without receiving it, he was censured by the church for it. Which plainly shews, that the apostolical and primitive church understood our Lord's words in the institution of this sacrament so, as that they looked upon themselves as obliged to do this in remembrance of him, as oft as they met together to worship and serve God.

AND verily he that considers the end of the institution, will find reason enough why they did, and we ought to receive this sacrament as oft as possibly we can : for seeing it was ordained in remembrance of Christ, and seeing we cannot possibly remember him too often who laid down his life for us, it must needs be our duty to do it as oft as we can, especially considering that the oftner we remember him, the better we shall believe in him. For by frequent receiving of his most blessed body and blood, that faith whereby we do it, being frequently exercised, is thereby more and more confirmed, and by consequence all other graces and virtues whatsoever being derived by faith from him, are thereby made more strong and vigorous in us. And therefore all that seriously mind the concerns of another life, cannot but look upon it as their interest as well as duty, to take all opportunities they can of receiving this holy sacrament, and to bless God for them. Be sure he that came into the world on purpose to save us, would never have instituted it, but that he knew how necessary it was, and how much it would conduce to our salvation by him.

FROM hence therefore we may see what great reason our Church had to appoint the communion-service to be used every Lord's-day and holy-day in the year, that all her members, who desire it, might at all such times have an opportunity to receive this holy sacrament. And so they generally did for some time after the reformation. But now if people do but receive it thrice a year, and so avoid the penalty of the law, they think they do a great matter : as if we had no other obligations upon us to do it, but only from the laws of the land ; which is a sad instance of the great degeneracy of the age we live in, and how far we are fallen from the zeal and piety both of the primitive christians, and our first reformers.

IT is not my design at this time to search into the reasons why this great duty is so commonly neglected among us. But it may not be amiss to observe that one great argument which the devil and his agents make use of to deter men from it, is taken from these words which I have now read, falsely understood, or at least not rightly considered. For seeing the apostle here saith, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*, according to our translation, people have been made to believe, that, if they be not worthy to receive the sacrament, and yet venture to do it, they are certainly damned. But that you may see how great and dangerous a mistake this is, I desire you to consider,

First, THAT this cannot possibly be the meaning of the words. For if so, no man ever did, or can receive the sacrament, but he must be damned ; forasmuch as no man ever yet was, or is, or will be, or can be worthy of so great a blessing. And certainly our saviour would never command us to do that which we cannot do without being damned.

MOREOVER, the word which the apostle here useth, *κρίμα*, doth not properly signify damnation, as it is translated in the text, but only judgment, as it is in the margent of your bibles. And therefore the most that can be deduced from it, is, that *they who eat and drink unworthily*, are obnoxious to the judgment of God for so doing, as all they are, who either pray, or hear, or do any other duty otherwise than they ought to do it. And what kind of judgment the apostle here means, he himself plainly declareth in the words following my text, saying, *for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep* ; which are all temporal judgments, which God is often pleased to inflict for other sins as well as this ; and are so far from eternal damnation, that they often prove the occasion of preventing it.

BUT

BUT that which is most of all to be considered, is what the apostle means by *eating and drinking unworthily*. For which we may observe, first, that he doth not say, he that being unworthy *eateth and drinketh*, but he that doth it unworthily, and so doth not speak much of the qualifications of the person that doth it, as of his manner of doing it. And what he means by *eating and drinking unworthily*, or after an unworthy manner, we may easily and fully understand both from the context, and the text itself.

FOR first, as to the context, the apostle is here speaking of the great disorders which he had heard of among the *Corinthians* in their christian assemblies; that there were divisions among them, even at those sacred times: and that though they intended to receive the sacrament, they did not really do it. *When ye come together therefore*, saith he, *into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper*, ver. 20. where he plainly intimates what I observed before, that their main design of coming together was to eat the Lord's supper; but as they managed the business, they did not do it. *For*, saith he, *in eating, every one taketh before the other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken: what have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?* ver. 21, 22. From whence it is plain, that the sin which he here reproves in the *Corinthians* was, that they eat the Lord's supper as if it had been common food, without expressing any respect or reverence to Christ's mystical body and blood; and as plain, that this is that which he here calls *eating and drinking unworthily*. They carried themselves at the Lord's table, as if they had been at their own. The great and rich men eat and drank too much; the poor had nothing to eat and drink: whence the apostle saith, *these were hungry, and the other drunk*. And they who eat this bread, and drink this cup, after this unworthy manner, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, as the apostle tells us, ver. 27. that is, they violate and profane Christ's mystical body and blood, and so are guilty, in a manner, of the same sin as the *Jews* were in deriding and crucifying of him: which also shews what kind of unworthy receiving the apostle here speaks of, even such whereby they trampled upon the son of God, and accounted the blood of the covenant an unholy or profane thing, and behaved themselves accordingly in the receiving of it.

THAT this is the true sense of receiving unworthily appears yet more plainly from the text itself. For here the apostle saith, *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation, or judgment, to himself, not discerning the Lord's body*. Which last words fully explain the former; for by them the apostle shews wherefore they who eat and drink unworthily, eat and drink damnation to themselves, even because they do not discern the Lord's body; that is, they do not discern or discriminate Christ's body from common food, by taking it (*veneratione singulariter debitâ*) with that veneration which is in a peculiar manner due to it, as St. *Augustine* explains the words, *Epist. 118. ad Januar.* Neither indeed can they admit of any other exposition. And therefore to receive unworthily in the apostle's sense, is plainly nothing else but to receive irreverently and profanely, in a manner unbecoming Christ's body and blood, unworthy of so great a mystery as that is. As for people to deport themselves no otherwise at the Lord's supper, than they do when they dine or sup at home, making no difference or discrimination betwixt that and their ordinary meals; but eating this bread, and drinking this cup, as if it was not Christ's body and blood, but common meat and drink; expressing no more regard or reverence towards it, than they do to bread or wine at their own tables: this, which is but too common among some people, is that which the apostle here calls *eating and drinking unworthily*; and they, who do so, instead of Christ's body and blood, which they do not discern, eat and drink the damnation, or judgment to themselves.

HAVING thus discovered what it is to receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper unworthily, we may easily see what is required to the worthy receiving of it. But howsoever, it being a matter of so great importance, I shall endeavour to explain it more fully to you. For which purpose we must know, that although this worthy receiving, as it is opposed to the unworthy before spoken of, consists properly in the carrying and demeaning ourselves, both in our souls and bodies, at the holy sacrament, in a manner worthy and suitable to that body and blood which we there receive; yet that we may do so, it is necessary

that our minds be first rightly disposed and prepared for it. In order whereunto the apostle lays down this general rule, *but let a man examine (or prove) himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*, ver. 28. But he doth not tell us particularly what it is that we must examine ourselves about: and therefore for that our surest way will be to consult our church, which, in her catechism acquaints us, that it is required of them who come to the Lord's supper to examine themselves about three things: "1. Whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life? 2. Have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death: and 3. Be in charity with all men." And accordingly in the exhortation at the communion she calls upon all the communicants actually to perform these great duties. And verily these three things, *repentance, faith, and charity*, are absolutely necessary to the qualifying us for the worthy receiving of Christ's body and blood, in the sense now explained.

FOR, first, unless a man be so sensible of, and sorry for his former sins, that he is now resolved for the future to forsake them, he cannot set that value upon Christ's dying for them, as is necessary to his carrying himself aright at the commemoration of it. For all the esteem and respect we have, or can shew to Christ, as dying for our sins, is grounded upon a due sense of these sins for which he died; which no man can in reason pretend to, that is not both truly humbled for them, and as stedfastly resolved against them. And therefore the first thing that we ought to do, in order to the fitting ourselves for the worthy receiving of the Lord's supper, is to look back upon our former lives, and consider seriously with ourselves, what sins in thought, word, or deed we have heretofore committed; and what duties to God or man we have hitherto neglected, and purpose with ourselves, by God's grace and assistance, that we will for the future do so no more; and so renew and ratify those vows and promises in this, which we made to God in the other sacrament, even when we were baptized. He that doth this heartily and sincerely, is so far rightly prepared for the worthy receiving of that body and blood, which he thus repenteth of.

THE next thing required, in order thereunto, is *faith*, as it is according to the apostle's description, *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. whereby we are as fully persuaded, that God will give us the good things he hath promised to us in Christ, as if we had them already; and are as certain of whatsoever he hath revealed, as if we saw it before our eyes. Without such a faith as this, it is impossible for us to discern the Lord's body, and by consequence to receive it worthily. For all that we see with our eyes is only bread and wine. Neither is it possible for us to look any further, but only by the eye of faith, whereby we behold Christ's body and blood as broken and shed for us; and so verily and indeed receive, and apply it to ourselves. And therefore, in order to our worthy receiving the holy sacrament, we must take special care to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith, whether we really believe all the articles of the christian religion, and have a sure trust and confidence on God's merciful promises for the pardon of our sins, and the salvation of our souls by the blood of Christ: for the main stress of our receiving aright lies upon this, as presently we shall see more clearly.

AND then as for *charity*, or a sincere and universal love to all men, without that no man is fit to appear before him who died for all men; much less to receive that body and blood which was offered up as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. For he cannot possibly give it that honour and respect which is due to it, by reason of his malice and hatred against some of those persons for whom it was offered. And besides that, he that is not in love and charity with all men, it is plain that he doth not forgive the wrongs and injuries which he hath received from some men, and therefore is not capable to receive the pardon of his own sins from God, and by consequence not worthy to receive that sacrament wherein it should be sealed to him. Wherefore, as ever we desire to receive it worthily, we must be sure to lay aside all malicious and revengeful thoughts against all persons whatsoever; and come with love as large, and of the same extent with that death which we there commemorate; as freely forgiving all others, as we desire that God, for Christ Jesus sake, should forgive us.

If we thus repent us truly for our sins past, have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ our saviour, amend our lives, and be in perfect charity with all men, we shall then be meet partakers of these holy mysteries, as our church assures us. But for that purpose we must not only have these graces beforehand, but we must likewise act and exercise them all the while that we are at our Lord's table; which that we may do, our church hath so contrived that incomparable office which she hath made for the administration of the holy communion, that from the beginning to the end there is continual matter and occasion given for the acting and exciting these christian virtues in us, and so for our due and worthy receiving of Christ's most precious body and blood; which that I may demonstrate to you, and therewith shew how we may and ought to eat this bread, and drink this cup so duly and worthily, that we may not eat and drink judgment, but health and salvation to ourselves, I shall briefly run through the whole office, beginning at the offertory.

OUR minds, therefore, being rightly disposed and prepared for so great a work, by an humble confession of our sins, by fervent and solemn prayers to God for the pardon of them, and for the grace to forsake them, by praising and magnifying his all-glorious name, and by hearing some part of his holy word read and expounded to us, we then make bold to address ourselves to our Lord's table, where the first thing we set about is to exercise our charity, and that two ways: first, by a liberal contribution of what God hath given us, to the relief of others necessities; and then by praying for Christ's whole catholick church militant here on earth, whereby we do not only profess ourselves to be members of that society, and to live in communion with it, but likewise express our charity to all sorts of persons in it, as our Lord did, by praying for them.

AFTER which the priest, in an exhortation composed for that purpose, puts the people in mind of the great benefit that will accrue to them, if with a true penitent heart, and lively faith they receive that holy sacrament, and of the greatness of the danger, if they receive the same unworthily; and therefore exhorts them to the exercise of the graces beforementioned, and to give their humble and hearty thanks to God the father, son, and holy ghost for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our saviour Christ, both God and man, who humbled himself to the death of the cross, that he might exalt us to everlasting life. And that we might always remember his said death, and the benefits of it, instituted this holy sacrament to our great and endless comfort; concluding with the great obligation that lies upon us to bless God for this his inestimable love, and to shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but likewise in our lives, by studying to serve him in true holiness and righteousness all our days.

THE exhortation ended, the minister invites all, who are thus prepared, to the Lord's supper, saying to them, *draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort.* He invites them, first, to *draw near*, thereby putting them in mind, that they are now invited into Christ's more special presence, to sit down with him at his own table; and therefore, as an emblem thereof, should come from the more remote parts of the church, as near to the said table as they can. But then he adviseth them to *draw near with faith*, as without which all their bodily approaches will signify nothing, it being only by faith that they can really draw near to Christ, and take the holy sacrament to their comfort. But seeing they cannot act their faith aright, until they have first confessed and repented of their sins; therefore he calls upon them to *make their humble confession unto God, meekly kneeling on their knees.*

AND now all that are to communicate, being prostrate upon their knees before God, do in a most humble and solemn manner jointly *acknowledge and bewail their manifold sins and wickedness, which they from time to time have committed in thought, word, and deed against his divine majesty; professing themselves most earnestly to repent of them, humbly beseeching almighty God to pardon what is past, and to grant them grace for the future to serve and please him in newness of life, for Christ Jesus sake.* All which is done with such grave, apposite, and pathetical words, that I do not see how it is possible for us to express our hearty and sincere repentance better than we do at that time.

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AND while the people continue in this humble posture, begging for mercy and grace at the hands of God, the minister stands up, and in the name of God assures them, that *he of his infinite mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him* : and therefore he applies the said promises unto them, praying, that *almighty God would accordingly have mercy upon them, pardon and deliver them from all their sins, confirm and strengthen them in all goodness, and bring them to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

AND here it is that our faith must begin to work, as it is the substance of things hoped for, so as firmly and constantly to believe, that upon our hearty and sincere repentance we are now absolved from all our former sins, and that from this time forward God will assist us with his grace and holy spirit, to serve and please him, according to the prayers which we have put up to him, and the promises which he hath made to us for that purpose, in our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ : for all the benefit of absolution, as pronounced by the minister, depends upon this our believing in the promises and word of God, upon which it is grounded.

WHICH therefore that we may do, the minister presently reads some choice sentences of scripture, wherein God hath promised or declared his willingness to pardon and absolve us from our sins in the blood of his son, that so we may act our faith accordingly upon them. And therefore he calls upon the people to hear, or hearken diligently to them, and take special notice of them.

As first, these comfortable words which our saviour saith to all that truly turn to him, *Matth. xi. 28. Come unto me all that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

WHICH words contain so firm and solid a foundation whereupon to build our faith, that if we be but truly penitent, we cannot doubt of God's mercy towards us. For here his only son with his own divine mouth invites all that are so to come to him, promising, or engaging his word, that he will refresh them, give them peace in their minds, quiet in their consciences, and rest to their whole souls. He'll take care that they neither *travel*, or be *heavy laden* any longer with the burden of their sins ; for he'll refresh them with the sense of God's mercy in the pardon of all their faults, and with the assistance of his grace in the mortifying of all their lusts. Sin shall no longer have dominion over them, because they are not now under the *law*, but under his *grace*, *Rom. vi. 14.*

Now these being the words of Christ himself, we ought to have a sure trust and confidence on them, so as to be fully persuaded, that we being in the number of those whom he calls, and having obeyed his call in coming to him, he, according to his word, will ease us of our sins, and give us rest : especially considering that he himself assures us with his own mouth, that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, *Joh. iii. 16.*

WHICH words containing the substance and design of the whole gospel, pronounced by Christ himself, are therefore read in the next place, that we might have an occasion to exercise our faith in it all, and that no place might be left for diffidence or doubting : for seeing the great reason that moved God to send his son, was his infinite love to mankind ; and the only end why he did it was, that *all that believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life* ; what can we desire more to excite and confirm our faith in him ? for *he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not but with him also freely give us all things ?* *Rom. viii. 32.*

BUT lest the sense of our former sins should be apt to make us despond or despair of mercy, that nothing may be wanting to the compleating of our faith at this time, there are two other divine sentences read ; the one of St. Paul, saying, *this is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*, *1 Tim. i. 15.* and the other of St. John, *if any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins*, *1 Joh. ii. 1.* whereby we are given to understand and believe, that Christ came into the world on purpose to save such sinners as we are ; and that he was made a propitiation for our sins, having undergone all that shame, and pain, and punishment which was due unto us for them, and is now our advocate in heaven, always interceding for us, and
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ready to apply the merits of his death and passions to us. For what an occasion have we here given us to fix and exercise our faith, as St. Paul did, saying, *who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea, rather, is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*, Rom. viii. 33, 34, &c.

HAVING thus exercised our faith, and so got above this world, we are now ready to go into the other, and join with the glorified saints and angels in praising and adoring that God that hath done so great things for us; which that we may do, the minister calls upon the people to lift up their hearts. And their hearts being now by faith wholly inclined to God, are as ready to do it, as he is to desire it; and therefore immediately answer, *we lift them up unto the Lord*. And now their hearts being all lift up together, and so fitted for celebrating the high praises of God, the minister invites them all to join with him in the doing it, saying, *let us give thanks unto our Lord God*: which they having consented to, saying, *it is meet and right so to do*; he turns himself to the Lord's table, and acknowledges to his divine majesty there specially present, that *it is very meet and right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places give thanks unto him*. And then he looking upon himself, and the rest of the communicants as members of the church triumphant in heaven; and all apprehending themselves by faith, as in the midst of that blessed society, where they hope e're long to be indeed, they join with them in singing forth the praises of the most high God, saying, *therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name*. &c. And certainly, if ever our souls be in heaven while our bodies are upon earth, it must needs be in the singing of this heavenly anthem; when our spirits, with those of just men made perfect, yea, with the whole company of heaven, in so solemn and seraphick a manner adore and magnify the eternal God our maker and redeemer. Especially when we celebrate the nativity, the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord, his mission of the Holy Ghost, and the most holy trinity, for which there are proper prefaces appointed, to raise up our hearts as high as possible, in praising God for such transcendent mysteries and mercies as these are.

AND now, if ever, our minds must needs be duly prepared to receive the blessed body and blood of our dear Lord; and therefore the minister having first acknowledged our unworthiness of so great a mercy, and prayed to God to assist us with his grace to receive it worthily, he then saith the prayer of consecration.

AND now there is nothing either said or done, but what puts us in mind of something or other whereupon to employ and exercise our faith.

WHEN we see the bread and wine set apart for consecration, it should mind us of God's eternal purpose, and determinate counsel, to send his son into the world, and to offer him up as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

THE minister's reading the prayer of consecration alone, none of the people speaking a word, nor any ways assisting him in it, should put us in mind how the whole work of our salvation was accomplished by Christ alone, no mere creature contributing any thing at all towards it.

WHEN we hear these words; *who in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread*; we are by faith to behold our Lord at his last supper, there instituting this sacrament which we are now to receive, and distributing it to his apostles with his own blessed hands.

WHEN we see the bread broken, then we should call to mind all that grief and pain, those bitter agonies and passions which our Lord suffered for our sins, and in our stead. How he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed: how his blessed body was broken, his hands and feet fasten'd to the cross with nails drove through them, and all for our sins, even for ours.

AND so when the minister takes the cup into his hand, then we are by faith to behold how fast the blood trickled down from our Lord's head, when crowned with thorns; from his hands and feet, when nailed to the cross; from his side, when pierced with the spear; and from his whole body, when he was in his agony, and all to wash away our sins; still believing that it was for our sins that all

this precious blood was shed ; for such and such sins, which we know every one ourselves to have been guilty of.

WHEN we hear our Lord's words pronounced, the words of consecration, *this is my body which is given for you ; and this is my blood which is shed for you, and for many for the remission of sins ;* then are we stedfastly to believe, that although the substance of bread and wine still remain, yet they are not now common bread and wine as to their use, but the body and blood of Christ, in that sense that he spoke the words ; inasmuch that " whosoever duly receives these creatures of bread and " wine according to Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and " passion, are partakers of his most precious body and blood ; " as 'tis expressed in the words of consecration.

WHEN we see the minister distributing this sacramental bread and wine to the several communicants, we are then by faith to apprehend our Lord offering his body and blood, and all the benefits of his death and passion to all that are willing and ready to receive them at his hands.

BUT when it comes to our turns to receive, then we are to lay aside all thoughts of bread, and wine, and minister, and of every thing else that is, or can be seen ; and fix our faith, as it is *the evidence of things not seen*, wholly and solely upon our blessed saviour, as communicating his own body and blood to us, to preserve both our bodies and souls to everlasting life. Which we are therefore to receive by faith, as it is *the substance of things hoped for* ; stedfastly believing it to be what our saviour said, *his body and blood, which, as our church faith, is verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper.* By which means, whatsoever it is to others, it will be to us, who receive it with such a faith, the substance of Christ's body and blood, and so of all the good things we hope for upon his account.

AND the better to excite and assist us in the exercise of our faith, after this manner, at our receiving the sacramental bread and wine, the minister, at the distribution of it, first applies the merits of Christ's death in general to each particular person that receives it, saying to every one singly, *the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, and the blood which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life, that so I may apply it to myself, as the body and blood of him that loved me, and gave himself for me, to preserve my body and soul to everlasting life.* And then he adds at the distribution of the bread, *take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.* Whereby I am put in mind to eat it in remembrance that Christ died for me in particular, and then am taught how to feed upon him, even in my heart by faith with thanksgiving. In my heart, because it is not bodily, but spiritual food ; and by faith, as the only means whereby the heart or soul can take its proper nourishment, and receive the substance of things here hoped for, even the body and blood of Christ. And then it must be with thanksgiving too, as the necessary consequent of faith. For as no man can be truly thankful to and for Christ, without actually believing in him ; so no man can actually believe in him, but he must needs be truly thankful both to and for him. And therefore in the distribution of the cup, after the words, *drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee,* it is only added, *and be thou thankful :* because this necessarily supposeth and requireth our feeding upon him in our heart by faith, as without which it is impossible for us to be truly thankful.

AND hence also it is, that the church requires us to receive the holy sacrament kneeling, not out of any respect to the creatures of bread and wine in themselves, but to put us in mind, that almighty God our creator and redeemer, the only object of all religious worship, is there specially present with us, offering his own body and blood to us, that so we may act our faith in him, and express our sense of his goodness to us, and of our own unworthiness of it, in the most humble posture that we can. And indeed, could our church be sure that all her members would receive as they ought with faith, she needed not have commanded them to receive it kneeling, for they could not do it any otherwise. For how can I pray in faith to almighty God to preserve both my body and soul to everlasting life, and not make my body, as well as my soul, bow down before him ? how can I by a quick and lively faith behold my saviour as coming to me, and offering me his own body and blood, and not fall down and worship him ? how can

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I by faith lay hold upon the pardon of all my sins, as there sealed and delivered to me, and receive it any otherwise than upon my knees? I dare not, I cannot do it. And they that can, have too much cause to suspect that they do not discern the Lord's body, and therefore cannot receive it worthily. Be sure our receiving the blessed body and blood of Christ, as the catholick church always did, in an humble and adoring posture, is both an argument and excitement of our faith in him: by it we demonstrate to the world and our own consciences, that we discern the Lord's body, and believe him to be really present with us: and by it we excite and stir up both ourselves and others to act, and exercise our faith more stedfastly upon him, in that by our adoring of him we actually acknowledge him to be God as well as man; and therefore an all-sufficient saviour, who is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him; and by consequence one whom we have all the reason in the world to believe and trust on.

AND then lastly, when we have thus spiritually eaten the flesh of Christ, and drunk his blood, then we are firmly to believe, and rest fully satisfied in our minds, that, according to his own words, Christ now dwelleth in us, and we in him; that Christ is one with us, and we with him. And therefore that God hath now sealed to us the pardon of all our sins, and will enable us for the future, by his own spirit, to walk in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life; which faith we are still to exercise all the while that others are receiving; adoring that infinite goodness that is so free and ready to communicate itself to such unworthy creatures as we are.

AND when all have received, with the same humble confidence we address ourselves to our heavenly father, as now reconciled to us in his own son, in that divine form of prayer, which he himself, whose body and blood we have now received, was pleased to compose, and require us to use upon all occasions. After which, having added another prayer proper for this great and solemn occasion, we join together in saying or singing that incomparable hymn, *Glory be to God on h^go*, &c. the first part whereof was sung by the choir of heaven at our Lord's nativity, and the rest added by the primitive, if not by the apostolical church, it being the most antient hymn that we know was ever used both by the *Greek* and *Latin* churches all along. And if ever we be fit to praise God in so seraphick a manner, it must needs be at this time, now that Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith, and so assists us in the doing of it. But for the performing it aright, it is necessary to keep our minds all the while intent and fix'd upon the great God, and our blessed saviour, to whom we speak in a peculiar manner, and with the eye of faith to look upon him as there present with us, and observing how earnestly we beseech him, the *lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, to have mercy upon us*; and how heartily we adore and magnify his sanctity, his authority over all things, and his, together with his holy spirit's, infinite height in the glory of God the father.

AFTER all which duly performed, having prayed for God's acceptance of what we have done, and for his blessing upon us, we are accordingly dismissed as well as may be, with the *peace of God which passeth all understanding*: and with the *blessing of God almighty the father, son, and holy ghost*, which will certainly be and remain with those who thus receive the holy sacrament always.

THUS we now see how we may and ought to receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper worthily. Blessed and thrice happy are they that do it, and that do it often: for the oftner we do it, the more expert we shall be at it, and the more benefit and comfort we shall receive from it. It is very difficult, if not impossible for them who do it only now and then, even to do it as they ought. And therefore it is no wonder they are never the better for it; it is rather a wonder if they be not much the worse. It is by frequent acts that habits are produced: it is by often eating and drinking of this spiritual food, that we learn to do it so as to digest and convert it into proper nourishment for our souls, that they may grow thereby; which the primitive christians and the apostles themselves were so sensible of, that they made this a necessary and essential part of all their publick devotions; at least, they never reckoned that they kept the Lord's day aright in remembrance of his resurrection, unless they had been at his table, to do this in remembrance of his death and passion. And could this primitive, this apostolical practice be once revived amongst us, our church would soon put on a new face,
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and appear as excellent in its members as it is in its constitution. For by this means we should soon arrive at that degree of grace and virtue, as to be, and live as becometh, christians indeed; that is, the most holy, most righteous, and most excellent persons upon earth; such as the primitive christians were, and such as we must be, if ever we desire to go to heaven.

WHAT, therefore, if the laws of the land do not absolutely require all men to communicate oftner than thrice a year? the only reason why they require it at all is, that all people may thereby manifest themselves to profess the christian religion established in the nation: for no human laws can look any further; and yet even for that it is judged necessary, and therefore commanded, that all persons should communicate at least thrice a year; and all priests and deacons in cathedral and collegiate churches every *Sunday* at least: which if they neglect to do, they are looked upon as no christians, and therefore are cast out of the church. But if so much be necessary to the very outward profession of our most holy religion, what shall we think of the practice of it? certainly nothing less is required to that, by the laws of Christ and his church, than to communicate as often as we can possibly find an opportunity: and to make one where we find none, by requesting, and if need be, by requiring the minister of the parish where we live, to administer it to us, who neither in law nor conscience can refuse it, when requested by a sufficient number of communicants.

I SHALL say no more, but that I never expect to see our church settled upon the lasting foundations of peace and piety, till the holy communion is oftner celebrated and received than for some years past it hath been used to be; and am sure, that if people were but sensible of the advantage it would be to them, they would need no other arguments to persuade them to the frequent receiving of it. For we should soon find, as many have done already, by experience, that this is the great means appointed by our blessed saviour, whereby to communicate himself, and all the merits of his death and passion to us. Insomuch that by a due and frequent receiving of this holy sacrament, our souls would be as much strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine. And we should receive such constant supplies of grace and virtue from him, whereby we should be enabled not only to avoid the sins and follies of this lower world, but always to live above it, and to have our conversation in heaven. In short, by our frequent conversing with our blessed Lord at his table here below, we shall be always fit and ready to go to him, and converse with him in his kingdom above, where we shall have no more need of sacraments, but shall see him face to face, and praise and adore him for evermore.

The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts in the knowledge and love of God, and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.

S E R M O N CXXXI.

The Gospel unprofitable only through Unbelief.

HEB. IV. 2.

*For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them :
but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed
with faith in them that heard it.*

HE that duly considers the excellency of the gospel, what clear discoveries it makes of God's will and man's duty, what an exact pattern and example of all true piety and virtue it sets before us in the life of Christ, what promises and overtures of grace and assistance it makes to all that truly believe in it ; and what strong assurances it gives us, that if we do what we can, God will be well-pleased with what we do, and in Christ accept of our sincerity instead of perfection, and crown our weak endeavours with nothing less than eternal glory ; so that they that are truly holy in time, shall be perfectly happy for ever : I say, he that seriously considers these things, may justly conclude, that wheresoever the gospel is preached, it must needs work a thorough reformation in them that hear it, so as to prevail upon them to devote themselves wholly to the service of the living God, and to the sincere performance of all such virtuous and good works, as he requireth of them. And by consequence that all they, which enjoy the gospel, should not only be good, but the very best of men, far exceeding all others in a sincere, universal, and constant obedience to all the laws and commands of God.

BUT if on the other side he considers withal, that they that not only enjoy the gospel, but do, or at least may read it, or hear it read or preached every day, so as to be thoroughly acquainted with all the truths therein revealed, all the laws therein enjoined, all the threatnings therein denounced, all the promises therein made, both of present assistance and acceptance in this world, and also of eternal happiness in the world to come. He that considers, I say, that even such persons as these are, to whom the gospel is so clearly preached, and made known, should be as much corrupt in their principles, as much debauched in their practices, as much addicted to the things of this world, as covetous of its riches, as ambitious of its honours, as desirous of its pleasures, as unthankful for mercies, as impatient under sufferings, as passionate, as malicious, as censorious of one another, as proud, as luxurious, as earthly-minded, as unjust in their dealings, as uncharitable to the poor, and every way generally vicious and wicked, as they that never yet heard of the gospel, or have it not so plainly discovered to them as these have ; such a

one may justly admire what should be the reason of this so great disparity betwixt the lives of those that profess the gospel, and the gospel itself, which they do profess : and how it should come to pass, that the gospel which is so frequently, so clearly, and so fully preached amongst us, should have so little, or no effect upon them that hear it ? or why it should not be as powerful and prevalent now as it was when it first began to be preached ? At St. *Peter's* preaching of one short sermon, concerning the truth and excellency of the gospel, there were no fewer than three thousand souls converted, *Acts* iii. 41. whereas now at the preaching of three thousand sermons, or at the hearing of the same sermon of St. *Peter* read or preached three thousand times over, we have just cause to fear there is scarce one soul converted. But men can now sit and hear the whole doctrine of the gospel explained, Christ's sufferings for sin opened, the reasonableness and excellency of all christian graces and moral virtues unfolded ; hell with all its miseries threaten'd to the impenitent and disobedient, and heaven with all its glories promised to them that repent and believe the gospel ; and yet be no more, nor scarce so much affected with it, as the heathens were with the oracles of *Apollo*, or the *Turks* with the *Alcoran* of *Mahomet*. But people can come to church, and perhaps many of them can make a shift, though with much ado, to sit out a sermon, and hear what is said concerning Christ, and his gospel, or concerning their duties to God and one another, and then go home again, and pass their censures upon what they have heard, and then trouble their heads no more about it. As if they were not at all concerned about the gospel, any farther than to hear it read, or preached to them : and therefore, although they hear it over and over again, it is all one, sinners they were, and sinners they will be, let the gospel say what it will.

BUT what ! hath the gospel lost its power and force ? is it become less effectual to the salvation of mankind than heretofore ? is its light eclipsed, or its heat abated ? is the virtue of Christ's blood ceased, or his cross now made of none effect ? is he able to save no more than he hath done already ? or is his gospel come to an end, and so must be the means of salvation no longer to us ? no, this cannot be : for the gospel was to last, and Christ will be with the preachers of it, unto the end of the world ; *behold*, saith he, *I am with you unto the end of the world*, *Matt.* xxviii. 20. and therefore the gospel will most certainly continue in force and power, so long as the sun and moon endure. And Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever ; always ready to assist at the preaching, and to promote the embracement of his gospel. So that the truths he hath delivered are as forcible, his doctrines as efficacious, his promises as faithful now as ever ; and therefore there can be nothing of failure or decay, either in the gospel itself, or in any thing else that belongs unto it.

BUT what then should be the reason that the gospel now-a-days makes so little alteration in their lives and manners that hear it preached to them ? are men grown more dull and heavy, more senseless and ignorant of their affairs and concerns than formerly they were ? do they only hear a sound of words, but are so stupid as not to understand the meaning of them ? this can by no means be alledged in these days, wherein men pretend to more knowledge in all the arts and sciences, and to more cunning and subtilty in their dealings, than ever their forefathers had : there being no sort of learning but what hath been very much improved, or at least is esteemed to be so, in this very age we live in. And as for trading, and trafficking in the world, it is certainly carried on with far more witty and artificial devices of cheating, than ever our forefathers dreamed of.

BUT why then is it, that men in our days should have the gospel amongst them, and yet be so little bettered by it ? is it because, though they have it amongst them, yet it is not so often preached, or expounded to them, at least not so clearly and fully as it used to be ? hath there any *Spanish* or popish inquisition been amongst us, whereby the people have been forbid to read the gospel, or their bibles have been taken from them ? or have our preachers been thrust into corners, and not been permitted to explain and apply the gospel to us ? hath it been now, as heretofore, a rare thing to hear a sermon ? or have the sermons, that have been preached, been so dark and obscure, or so dull and impertinent, so empty and frivolous, that the

the doctrine and duties of the gospel could not be learned from them? surely *England*, of all the nations of the world, can never plead this, especially for this last age, wherein there have been more sermons preached, than had been in all the ages since our saviour's time before; and more than in any other nation in the world besides, in the same compass of time; and that too in as plain and familiar a way as the gospel was ever preached since the apostles times. And besides that, this nation is so far from being able to make any such plea or excuse for themselves, that the people generally look upon themselves as understanding the gospel far better than ever their fathers did; accounting the fathers themselves but novices in comparison of them; and pretending to so much light and knowledge in the gospel, that they far excel and surpass all that went before them.

BUT how then comes it to pass, that the gospel should be so clearly preached, and yet all manner of heresy, wickedness, debauchery, and hypocrisy, so rise amongst us? why, the apostle in my text gives us the reason of it in few terms; *the word preached doth not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it.* The christian religion, through the goodness and mercy of almighty God, is the professed religion of the whole nation, transmitted to us from our ancestors, and established by the laws of the land; whereby it comes to pass, that the gospel is ordinarily read and preached amongst us, and we give it the hearing, and take it for granted, that we believe it, but really do not; for if we did, we could not but live up unto what is prescribed in it. So that all the reasons that can be brought for the manifold vices and enormities committed by them that enjoy and profess the gospel, must still be resolved into this one, even into the unbelief or infidelity of them that hear it: so that the generality of christians themselves, even all such as do not sincerely perform their duty, both to God and man, according to the gospel, may justly be accounted and called infidels: as I shall endeavour plainly to discover from these words, wherein the apostle doth clearly and expressly impute the unsuccessfulness of the gospel only unto the want of faith, saying, *for unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them, &c.*

FOR the opening of which words we must consider, how the apostle having proved in the foregoing chapter, that there was a rest promised to the people of God, and that *unbelief* was the only reason that kept them out of it: he therefore exhorts all to have a care lest they should miss of it upon the same account. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it: and then he gives the reason of his advice in the words of my text; *for, saith he, unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them*; that is, it is the same gospel that is preached to us, and to them; but seeing they received no benefit from it, nor were admitted into the rest promised in it, merely upon the account of their unbelief, we have cause to beware, that the same reason do not hinder us too from partaking of it.

FROM whence we may observe by the way, against the *Socinians*, that the same promise of future rest was made, and the same gospel preached in the old as in the new testament; and that they that lived before, as well as they that live since the coming of our saviour, were saved only in and through him. For the apostle having in the foregoing chapter cited these words of the psalmist, *to day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*, Heb. iii. 7. He afterwards asserts, that not believing that voice was the reason why God sware, *they should not enter into his rest*, ver. 18. and then in my text says, *that the gospel was preached to us, even as well as to them*; and by consequence it behoves us, as well as it did them, to have a care of not believing it. From whence nothing can be more plain, than that the apostle interprets the voice of the Lord there spoken to, to be the gospel, and that the same gospel was preached to them, which is now preached to us. There are many places of the like importance, both in the new and old testament; from whence any one, that doth not wilfully shut his eyes against the light, may clearly discover both the certainty and necessity of this truth. But this not being that which I principally intend at this time, I shall wave it for the present, only minding you of one place, which St. Peter also quotes to this purpose; when having told the rulers and the elders of the *Jews*, that it was only by the name of Christ that he had cured the man lame from his mother's womb, he presently adds
out

out of the same psalmist, *this is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner*, Acts vi. 11. that is, this person, whom you have so far despised, as to crucify him, it is he, and he alone, upon whom our salvation depends: *neither, saith he, is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given amongst men, whereby we must be saved*, ver. 12.

Now the apostle, having thus asserted the preaching of the gospel in all ages, shews the reason why it did not profit all them that heard it, even because of their unbelief. *But the word preached*, saith he, or the word of hearing, as it is in the original; that is, the promise of pardon and salvation in the Messiah, which was made, and they had heard from God, *it did not profit them*; it had not that effect upon them, as to lead them to everlasting rest, *not being mixed with faith in them that heard it*; that is, not being assented to or believed as it ought to have been by them that heard it. For, *not being mixed with faith* is a metaphorical expression, taken from the mixing of liquors, or rather potions, wherein, if any necessary ingredient be wanting, the whole becomes ineffectual. So the promises of the gospel, howsoever full and certain they are in themselves, howsoever clearly and faithfully they are made known to others; yet unless they be received by faith, they will be no ways beneficial or profitable to them.

THIS, therefore, being the true and proper meaning of the words, it is obvious to observe, that the apostle here ascribes it only unto the want of faith, that the gospel doth not profit them that hear it. That the fault is not to be laid upon the gospel that is preached, but upon them that hear it; and upon nothing else in them neither, but only their not believing what they hear. So it was in the former days, and so it is in ours: the gospel is preached, and people flock to hear it; but it generally hath no influence upon them, nor does them any good at all, because they do not really believe what they hear; which, I fear, is the case of too many amongst us, who perhaps have lived this forty, fifty, or sixty years in the world, where the gospel hath been preached; and they have been constant, and perhaps very zealous hearers of it too, and yet have received no real benefit at all from it, being full as proud and covetous, as hypocritical and uncharitable, as ever. And all because, although they hear it over and over-again, yet they do not really, they do not thoroughly believe it: and therefore it is no wonder that they are no better for it, it being impossible both that the gospel should profit any one that doth not rightly believe it, and that it should not profit them that do.

THESE therefore are the two things which I must endeavour to prove; first, that the gospel will no way profit us without faith; and then, secondly, he that doth truly believe in it, cannot but receive extraordinary profit and good by it.

FOR the opening of the *first*; we must first consider what we are here to understand by the gospel, or word *preached*. In brief, by the gospel here we are to understand the whole system of evangelical revelations, delivered to us by Christ and his apostles, consisting of several truths asserted, acts of several persons recorded, duties enjoined, sins forbidden, threatnings denounced against the disobedient, and promises of pardon and acceptance made to those that repent and believe. All which are comprehended under the general notion of the gospel taken in its fullest extent and latitude. And therefore the belief of the gospel implies the belief of all these things, as contained under it, and revealed in it: neither can any one be said to believe one of them, that doth not truly believe all; there being the same ground to believe all, as there is to believe any one of them: so that he that believes the gospel cannot but believe all in it.

AND so I come to the *second* thing to be considered, and that is, what it is to believe in a gospel sense, or what is that faith, without which the gospel will avail us nothing. That such an act as faith is required by the gospel, is a thing you all know; there being no one duty so frequently pressed and inculcated as this. *Repent and believe the gospel* was not only the first sermon that our saviour preached, but it was the sum and substance of all the rest; yea, and the only reason why the gospel was committed to writing, was, that we might believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing we might have life thro' his name*, Joh. xx. 31. Now to find out what that faith is, which the gospel requires of us, our best and surest way is to consult the gospel itself, and such as were the first preachers of it to the world, I mean the apostles; one whereof gives this plain description of it, *faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. which

which being certainly the true notion of that faith which the gospel enjoins, it deserves our more serious consideration. Here therefore the apostle describes faith by its internal form, and external object; the internal form he expresses by two words, *ὑπόστασις* and *ἔλεγχος*, *substance* and *evidence*; the external objects are things hoped for, and not seen: first, faith he, *faith is the substance of things hoped for*. It is the substance, not in a physical, but a moral sense: it is to the substance of things hoped for, that it makes them really subsist in the mind and heart of him that believes. So that he looks upon them as certain, as if he had them already in possession; which is notably exemplified in the patriarchs, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, of whom he saith, *these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them*, Heb. xi. 13. where we may plainly see how faith is the substance of things hoped for. God had promised to give them the land of *Canaan* for an inheritance; and therefore, though they all died before they inherited it, yet they could not but hope for it; and by faith they were so persuaded that the land should be theirs in their posterity, that themselves embraced it, reckoning themselves already possessed of it. And so faith was the substance of what they hoped for. Neither is it only *the substance of things hoped for*, but *the evidence of things not seen*; that is, it presents things not seen, whether past, present, or to come, as really before our eyes, as if we saw the flood many years before it came, because God had said it should come, Heb. xi. 7. Thus *Abraham* by faith saw the city, *which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*, ver. 10. Thus *Joseph* by faith saw the children of *Israel* departing out of *Egypt*, ver. 22. Thus *Moses* by faith saw him that is invisible, ver. 27. Thus it is that by faith we look not at those things which are seen, but at those which are not seen, 2 Cor. i. 18.

THIS therefore is the faith which the gospel requires, even such a faith whereby we are as fully persuaded of the truth of what God hath promised or asserted in his gospel, as if we saw it fulfilled or verified before our eyes; nothing doubting but what he promises is most absolutely certain, and what he saith most perfectly true. And without such a faith, as it is impossible for us to please God, so it is impossible for God's word to profit us.

WHICH brings me to the last thing to be considered, even the reason why the word preached cannot profit, unless it be mixed, or received with such a faith as this; which we may dispatch in few words. For besides that, the promises of the gospel are all made with this proviso, that we believe in them, and by consequence will never be fulfilled without it. I say, besides that, the gospel being purely of divine revelation, it cannot be the object either of our sense or reason; and therefore can have no real existence, or subsistence as to us, but only by faith; and by consequence can have no influence at all upon us, nor afford any benefit at all to us. We never saw Christ either born or crucified; we never saw him doing or suffering any thing; we never saw him rising from the grave, or ascending up to heaven; neither can we conclude by reason from any premisses whatsoever, that Christ came into the world to die for our sins, and that in and through him our transgressions shall be pardoned, and our persons accepted. The certainty of these, and the like truths, depends merely upon the testimony and word of God himself; which we are therefore only bound to believe, because he asserts them. But now he that doth not believe them, it is all one to him, whether they had been asserted or no. For what if Christ said, that *unless ye repent, you must all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3? he that doth not believe it, will repent never the sooner because Christ said it. And what if he said, *come unto me, and I will give you rest*, Matth. xi. 29? he that doth not believe that he may have rest in him, will never go unto him for it. And what if the gospel threaten hell and damnation to the impenitent and disobedient, and promise heaven and everlasting life to them that repent and believe in Christ? what signifies this to one that doth not believe it, or think it true? he will be no more affected with hell-fire than with painted flames; with heaven's glory no more than with a fool's paradise. For whatsoever the gospel saith, he believes no such thing. And therefore it is impossible that such a one should receive any profit by hearing of the word, seeing he doth not believe what he hears to be really true. And hence it is that people come so frequently to church and hear of God and Christ, of heaven and hell, and such like things,

things, not being fully persuaded of the truth of what they hear, they go as they come, without being bettered by it, which otherwise could not be.

HAVING thus discovered that the word preached cannot profit us unless we believe it, we are now to consider whether it be possible to believe it, and yet receive no profit from it. But this certainly is altogether as impossible as the other, as I shall endeavour now to discover unto you, that you may all understand more perfectly where the fault lies, that you are not much better by every sermon you hear, and that every one of you is not as great and real a saint as ever lived. I am sure there is none of you but do or may understand the gospel, and all the contents of it, as well as ever any persons in the world either did or could: none of you but either have or may have the word continually sounding in your ears. And did you but practise according to what you do or may hear, what holy, what glorious creatures would you all be? but the mischief is, you hear, and hear the word over and over-again preached, explained, confirmed, and applied to you; but you do not really, you do not thoroughly believe and receive it as you ought to do. It is a customary thing amongst us to hear sermons, and to be present while a discourse is made concerning some point in divinity, or something revealed in the gospel to us; and think it to be true in general, and therefore take it for granted, that we truly believe it to be so. Whereas, alas! there is no such matter; as you may easily conclude from your not being every way such excellent and incomparable persons as the gospel, which you so frequently hear, enjoins you to be. For as you cannot profit by what you hear, unless you believe it; so you cannot believe it, but you must needs profit by it; yea, so profit by it, as to live up to it, *1 Thess. ii. 13.*

FOR, first, all the promises of the gospel are made to them that believe; yea, heaven itself, with all its glory and happiness, is promised to them: for *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16.* and, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, Acts xvi. 31.* but *without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14.* And therefore it must of necessity follow, that he that truly believes the gospel, must be really and truly holy; for otherwise it is impossible for him to have the promise of eternal happiness fulfilled unto him. And besides that, where heaven is promised, whatsoever is necessary to the enjoyment of it, must needs be included in the same promise. But the inclination of our souls to God, together with all true grace and virtue, is absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of heaven; and therefore cannot but be promised together with it, unto all those that truly believe the gospel. And therefore whosoever is not eminent for piety and good works, or howsoever doth not sincerely endeavour at least, unto the utmost of his power, to be so, he may conclude his faith to be defective, and that he doth not really believe in Christ as he should do; for did he really believe he could not but have all the promises of the gospel fulfilled to him, and by consequence be holy in all manner of conversation, as it is necessary all such should be that go to heaven.

BUT not to insist any longer upon that, we need go no further to prove this, than to the nature of faith itself; which being, as I have shewn, *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, even such an act or habit of the mind, whereby the soul is so fully persuaded of the truth of all the promises of God, that the christian looks upon them as certain as if they were already fulfilled; and as clearly sees what God foretells, as if he had it before his eyes; and so is as much assured of every thing that he meets with in the gospel, as he is or can be of any thing in the world besides, be it never so plain and obvious unto him. He that hath such a faith as this is, cannot but have that influence upon him, as to sway and bend his mind to the performance of whatsoever duties the gospel requires of him. For faith cannot but have as much force and power upon the mind in spiritual, as it hath in natural things. Now suppose you were all thoroughly persuaded, that if you go out of this place within this hour, you would be no sooner out, but you would immediately drop down dead; would not such a persuasion as this prevail upon you all to stay here until the hour is fully expired? I dare say it would. Or if you did really believe, that if you went to such or such an house this night, you would most certainly be killed there, would any of

of you venture to go? I dare say you would not. Or suppose you were sure to lose all that you have in the world, unless you solemnly begged of God upon your knees to continue your estates to you? would not you all strive which should be upon their knees first? you cannot but believe you would. Would not the covetous man be liberal, if he really believed, that by giving of a penny he should gain a pound? would the drunkard himself drink that cup wherein he believes there is deadly poison? would the profane swearer dare to take the name of the eternal God in vain, did he really believe that the next time he did it he should be struck dumb, and never speak more? would not the luxurious person abstain from his unclean dalliances, if he was sure he should die in the very next act that he committed? or would not the most obstinate rebel throw down his sword immediately, if he was really assured that it would otherwise be sheathed in his own bowels? I dare appeal to all your consciences, whether you do not really believe that such persuasions as these are, would have the several effects which I have now mentioned. I am confident you all believe it. And if an human faith hath such power in natural, a divine faith surely cannot but have as much, if not much more, in spiritual affairs: which that I may clear up the better to you, I shall instance in several particulars.

First, THEREFORE you all know that our saviour said, *but I say unto you, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3. Now were you all thoroughly persuaded of the truth of this proposition, so as really to believe, that except you were so sensible of, so humbled for, so resolved against, and so converted from your sins, as for the future to observe all the commandments of God, as near as possibly you can, otherwise you must never know what true happiness, joy, or comfort is, but must suffer the most exquisite torments that it is possible for a creature to undergo: I say, did you really believe this, would any of you dare to live in the wilful commission of any known sin, or else in the wilful neglect of any known duty? I cannot believe it. A thorough persuasion of this truth would not suffer you to do it.

AGAIN, both the law and the gospel do frequently assure us, that the great God that made us is every where present with us; that *all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*, Heb. iv. 13. Now did you all believe this as you ought to do, even that the supreme and all-glorious being, that created and preserves the world, is continually with you wheresoever you are, and strictly observes you whatsoever ye do, taking special notice of every thought, word, and action, that comes from you, whether it be according to his laws, or no. Did you really believe this, would it not have a strange awe upon your spirits? would it not make you fear and dread the thoughts of doing any thing which you know to be offensive to him? or, to bring it closer to you, did you firmly believe, that at this very moment the eternal God, the judge of all the world, is as really in this place as yourselves are, that he knows both every word that I have spoke, and every thought that hath come up in any of your hearts, as really as I have spoke it, or you have thought it; yea, that he observes at this very moment what every one of you is now thinking of, as really as you heard me speak these words: I say, did you believe this, would not you startle, and be affrighted at it? would you not abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes before him? would you dare to suffer your thoughts to be running up and down the world, while your bodies are in his presence and service? I dare say you durst not.

FURTHERMORE; our saviour saith, *seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things, that is, all things necessary for life and godliness, shall be added to you*, Matth. vi. 33. These being the words of Christ, you may think that you verily believe them; but I fear ye do not. For did you verily believe, that, according to this promise, if you devote yourselves wholly to the service of the living God, you need not trouble yourselves about any thing else, but God himself would take care to provide for you, and give you whatsoever is truly good and needful for you: I say, did you verily believe this, would you be solicitous about the things of this life? would your hearts be bent, or your souls inclined to any thing here below? would not common prudence teach you to take the surest way for your subsistence, and not to suffer yourselves to be tormented with needless fears, and carking cares, about that which God himself hath promised to provide for you: I know it would.

MOREOVER,

MOREOVER, our saviour saith, *ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*, Matth. vii. 7. *and whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. Now did you all believe this, even that upon your solemn and sincere petitioning for it, there is no truly good thing but you may obtain in the name of Jesus Christ, would you need any other arguments to excite and stir you up to prayer? would not this be of itself a sufficient motive unto you? do you think you could be able to forbear praying for a whole day together? or if you did but believe it to be true what Christ saith, that *where but two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Matth. xviii. 20. did you verily believe this, I say, even that whensoever we meet here on any day of the week to pray to the great God, to hear his word, and to praise his name, that then our blessed Lord is in a peculiar manner present with us; what flocking should we then have to prayers? how happy should we think ourselves that we can enjoy them? and therefore so long as I see that you do not prize nor regard the opportunities you have of making your publick addresses to almighty God, and of performing your homage and devotion to him, but either never come at all, or else absent yourselves upon any slight occasion, let me tell you, you give us too much cause to suspect, that, for all your profession of the christian religion, you do not really believe Christ's words, nor think that he meant as he said: for if you did, you would not look upon prayers as a burden, but as the greatest honour, privilege and happiness that you can enjoy.

AGAIN: did you believe that *God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*, Eccles. xii. 14. That *God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*, Acts xvii. 21. So that *we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every man may receive the things that he hath done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad*, 2 Cor. v. 10. Did you all believe that, according to these and the like scriptures, you must all ere long appear before Christ's tribunal, as really as ye are now in this place, that then your lives shall be all reviewed, and all your thoughts, your words and actions looked over again, and examined by the word of God; and that Christ accordingly will say either, *come ye blessed, or depart ye cursed*, to every soul here present, as really as ever you heard a word spoken in all your lives. Did you believe this, I say, would it not make you very careful of what you think, or speak, or do? would it be possible for you to be so fool-hardy and presumptuous, as wilfully to break the laws, abuse the mercies, despise the judgments, and blaspheme the name of the eternal God, if you really believed that for all these things God would bring you into judgment? no, you could not be so, it being impossible for a man that hath, and useth his reason, to do that which he knows and believes at the same time to be so evil, dangerous, and destructive to him.

LASTLY, our blessed saviour assures us, that *the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal*, Matth. xxv. 46. Now did you verily believe this; first, that if you continue in your sins, without forsaking of them, or having a pardon for them, you are then most certainly undone for ever; and that the momentary pleasure you have in sin shall be punished with everlasting torments, and your seeming delights in time with real misery to eternity; did you verily believe, that if you live and die in sin, you shall ere long be amongst the fiends of hell and damned souls, weeping and wailing, and gnashing your teeth in the bottomless pit, as really as you are here at this time? would not such persuasions and believing thoughts, as these are, damp all the pleasure you use to take in sin, and convert it into hatred and detestation against it; and into sorrow and repentance for it? if you were sure to live in want, in disgrace, in pain, and all manner of misery all your life long, unless you spent one hour this night in prayer to God, and reading of his holy word, would any of you neglect so easy a duty, if you were sure by that means to prevent so long and certain troubles? I dare say you would not. But how much more then, if you was assured in your consciences, and thoroughly persuaded in your minds, that eternal torments are most certainly designed for all impenitent sinners, and that unless you be truly holy in
time,

time you shall be perfectly miserable to eternity: how much more, I say, would such a belief as this awake and stir you up to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?* how fearful would it make you of offending, how careful to please God?

AND then on the other side: if you did really believe, that there is such a place in the world as we call heaven; a place of nothing but joy and comfort, of real pleasure and delight; a place as free from misery, and as full of happiness, as it is possible for us to desire. And that every soul here present, in and through Christ, may come to this place, and enjoy it for ever, so as never to feel any pain, or take any care more, but always to live as happily as he can wish to do. Did you, I say, really and firmly believe this, would not you all desire to come to so glorious, so blessed a place as this is? nay, would not you so desire it as to make it your constant business in this world to get thither? would you think any duty too great to undertake, or any misery too heavy to undergo, or any thing too dear to part withal for such a place as this: and if ye believed also, that *without holiness no man shall ever see God*, nor come to this place of rest, could you give any sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eye-lids, until your sins are subdued, and your souls sanctified by the grace of God? I do not think ye could. For a full persuasion and assurance of such transcendent happiness as this must needs deaden your affections to all things else, and quicken them so towards heaven, that your minds would never be quiet, nor your souls at rest, but whilst you are looking after it, and walking in the narrow path that leads unto it.

I MIGHT instance in several other particulars of the like nature, yea, in any thing that the gospel treats or speaks of. But these may be sufficient to fix this great truth upon your spirits, that it is nothing but infidelity and unbelief in them that hear it that makes the gospel so unprofitable unto them: for did you really believe, that *except you repent, you must all perish*, you would not continue in your sins. Did you believe that whatsoever good things you asked, you might have them, you could not forbear asking: did you believe, that God is always with you, and sees you, you would not dare to do any thing to offend him: did you believe, that if you served God in the first place, he would provide all necessities for you, you would not trouble your heads about any thing but how to serve God: did you believe that God will examine all your actions in the world to come, you durst not but conform them to his laws in this: did you believe that the wicked shall be miserable, and the righteous happy to eternity, you could not but endeavour to live as righteously as possibly you can in time. And therefore, until you frame your lives according to the commands of the gospel, whatsoever you may fancy to yourselves, you do not really believe it. I say it again, you do not really believe the gospel, whatsoever profession you make of it, whatsoever pretences you make unto it, howsoever zealous you are in its behalf, you have no more real and true faith in it, than they that never heard of it. For true faith in the gospel is quite another thing than the world is apt to imagine it, the apostle tells us, *this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith; and who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the son of God*, as you read 1 John v. 4, 5.

FROM whence you may observe, that faith in Christ and his gospel is such a victorious grace, that it conquers and overcomes all this world. For by faith we may clearly see into the vanity of all things here below, and the glory and excellency of those things that are above; so as to trample upon and despise the highest overtures that this world can make us, looking upon them as nothing, as less than nothing in comparison of what is purchased and prepared for us by Jesus Christ in the world to come. And so there is a strong power and efficacy in true faith, so great, that he which hath it cannot but act according to it. And therefore we may conclude, that where a man doth not live up to the gospel, it is most certain he doth not believe it.

THUS therefore you see the reason why the word preached doth so seldom profit, even because it is not mixed with faith in them that hear it. Men hear the gospel preached, but they do not really, they do not firmly believe it; for if they did, there would be no complaining in our streets of injustice and oppression; in our state, of sedition and rebellion; nor in our church, of schism and faction;

but all amongst us, having the gospel so clearly dispensed to them, would soon become real and true christians, eminent in their religion, justice, and charity, and in all graces and virtues whatsoever. Which, therefore, that you may all be, let me advise you to begin here but to do that, which ye all profess, even to believe the gospel. And let me tell you, there is nothing in the world that you have or can have more, no, nor so much ground to believe, as you have to believe it; for you have the infallible word and testimony of almighty God himself for it; and that too confirmed with many real and undoubted miracles, wrought on purpose to strengthen your faith in it: which, if seriously weighed, cannot but convince any sober, unprejudiced and considerative person of the truth and certainty of it. And yet it is strange to consider, what a rare thing it is to find a man that truly believes it. But this also adds to the confirmation of it, it being no more than what was foretold by Christ himself, saying, *when the son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii. 8. Whence it seems, he did not only question, but foresaw at that time, that at his second coming he should find but little or no faith upon earth. And verily I fear, that if he should come now, he would find but very little faith amongst us. I speak not this to censure or discourage any of you, but to excite you all to a greater diligence, in using all means to confirm your faith, without which it will be in vain for me to preach, or you to hear. And therefore, as you desire not to mispend your time in coming to hear the gospel preached, but to be profited by what you hear, be sure to come with faith. And to that end study all means imaginable to get your faith confirmed in the gospel.

BUT then you'll say, how may we do that? why, faith, you know, *is the gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. and therefore you must go to him for it. And, being sensible of the greatness of your unbelief, or at least of the weakness of your faith, beg of him, whose gift it is, to bestow it upon you, praying with the apostles, *Lord increase our faith*, Luke xvii. 5. and humbly confiding, that in and through Christ he will hear your prayers; wait upon him for his answer in his holy ordinances; for, as the apostle tells you, *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, Rom. x. 17. So that, although the word cannot profit us without faith, yet faith is ordinarily produced and confirmed in us by it; not by bare coming to hear a sermon, but by considering and meditating upon what you hear, and upon the grounds you have to believe it: which, by degrees, will strangely confirm you in the belief of it; by which means you will soon learn the art of mixing what you hear with faith. And then you'll find hearing the word of God to be quite another thing from what it was heretofore: and it will make such impressions upon you, that you will soon excel and out-strip others both in your piety and devotions towards God, and likewise in your charity and justice to one another. And then you'll live like christians indeed; and so believe in Christ now as to enjoy him for ever.

SERMON CXXXII.

Salvation wholly owing to Faith in Christ.

ACTS xvi. 31.

And they said unto him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.

IF you and I did but seriously bethink ourselves at this time, what we are, and what we have been; what filth we contracted by coming through the loins of our sinful parents, and what actual transgressions we have added to our original pollution; did we but recollect ourselves, and consider how many, and what great offences we have committed against the eternal God, since we received our beings from him, how should we blush and be ashamed in his presence! how should we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes before him! for we are all but as so many guilty malefactors here, assembled before the judge of the whole world, guilty of transgressing his laws, and abusing his mercies, guilty of profaning his sabbaths, and blaspheming his name, guilty of the highest treason imaginable, even of actual rebellion against the universal monarch, the supreme lord and governor of heaven and earth; insomuch, that should he now enter into judgment with us, should he deal with us after our sins, and reward us according to our iniquities, he might justly condemn and frown us all out of the place we are in, into everlasting misery and torment.

NEITHER is this the condition only of some few persons amongst us, for we have all sinned; we were all born in sin, and have lived in sin; high and low, rich and poor, old and young, we have all broken the laws of him that made us. We may differ in other particulars, as in our estates, our callings, our tempers and constitutions, and the like; but I am sure we all agree in this, we are all sinners: not a soul amongst us can say, I am clear from sin. And if any one should presume to say so, I may, without breach either of charity or civility, tell him to his face, he is a liar. For so St. John himself, inspired by the Holy Ghost, saith, *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*, 1 Joh. i. 8. And if we have all sinned, as be sure we have, then we cannot all but be equally subject and obnoxious to the wrath of God, and all those dismal punishments, which are due to sin; we have all equally deserved, and may therefore justly expect *the wages of sin, even eternal death*, Rom. vi. 23. Neither may we only expect it hereafter, for we have but too much cause to look for it every moment: none of us being ever certain, but that he may draw his next breath in eternal flames, and so feel all the misery, pain and torment, which infinite wisdom can invent for him, infinite justice adjudge to him, and infinite power inflict upon him.

THIS is the sad and doleful condition we are all in by reason of our sins; the consideration whereof, methinks, should strike that terror into you, as to make you dread the very thoughts of those sins, which heretofore you have made your
pleasure

pleasure and delight. This I am confident of, that none of you can rightly weigh, and duly consider what you have done, but your hearts must of necessity be broken and contrite for your sins, so as to loath and abhor yourselves at each remembrance of them; yea, so as not to be able to endure yourselves, and scarcely to keep your spirits from sinking within you, under so great a weight, so insupportable a burden that lies upon you, so as to cry out in the bitterness of your souls, Oh wretched men and women that we are, that ever we have been so ungrateful to him that made us, so unthankful for his mercies, so unfruitful under his ordinances, so unmindful both of him and ourselves, so sinful in all our ways, so foolish and unwise through our whole lives, as to incur the displeasure of so great a God, neglect the concerns of such precious souls, transgress such righteous laws, and deserve such dreadful judgments, such eternal torments as we have done! Oh, whether shall we go, what way shall we take, what shall we do that we may be eased of this intolerable load of sins that lies upon us, that our God may be reconciled unto us, that our iniquities may be all pardoned, and our souls may be freed from the misery which we have deserved, and advanced to that eternal happiness which they were at first designed for!

I HOPE this is the language of most, or of all your souls, who being sensible of your sins, cannot but be likewise humbled for them; so humbled and broken for them, that you long to be rid of them, saying within yourselves, *what shall we do to be saved?* to be saved from our sins, to be saved from our lusts, to be saved from everlasting ruin and destruction? if, being possessed with a due sense of your sins, you seriously propound this question to me, as I hope you, at least in your hearts, do, I dare promise to give you a most certain and infallible solution of it, even in the words of my text, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.* For this was the answer which St. Paul and Silas gave to the keeper of the prison, who being, as I hope you are, troubled and grieved for his sins, said to them, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* they said to him, *believe in the lord, &c.* where we may first observe the manner and method of this man's salvation. He was by profession a jailor; by country, a *Macedonian*; by his religion, if he had any, an heathen: be sure he was very severe against the christians, especially against Paul and Silas; for they being committed to his charge and custody, *he thrust them into the inner chamber, and made their feet fast in the stocks*, ver. 24. but about midnight, as they were praying and singing praises to almighty God, the foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors opened, and the bonds of the prisoners loosed: at which the jailor being awaken'd out of his sleep, thinking the prisoners had been all fled, and himself obnoxious to death by the *Roman* laws, would have prevented the execution of it by another, by doing it himself; and for that end drew his sword to kill himself: which St. Paul seeing, and retaining no grudge or malice against him for the rigour and severity wherewith he had used them, calls to him to do himself no harm, assuring him they were all there; not a man gone, although the doors were open, and so the passage clear for them. Upon which the jailor was so startled, that he presently calls for a candle, comes in trembling, and falls down before the feet of St. Paul and Silas, not to worship them, but to crave their pardon for what he done against them. And here was the beginning of his conversion; his heart being now contrite and broken for his sins, that he was not able to keep up his spirits, but sunk down before them. Now he was so sensible of, so humble for his sins, that he trembled at the remembrance of them. And therefore laying aside the thoughts of all other things, the great and only scruple that now lay upon his conscience, the great and only question he had now to propound was, not how he might be rich, not how he might attain to honour and reputation in the world, not how he might do what he saw was done for them, even open his prison-doors without keys, and loosen his prisoners bonds without touching them, but how he *might be saved*: Oh, *Sirs*, said he, *what must I do to be saved?* He was troubled for his sins already, but that was not enough, he knew there was something else to be done, which as yet he knew not of: but he was certain the apostles knew well enough, because God had wrought so great a miracle for them before his eyes: and therefore he propounded that question unto them, who presently resolved it, acquainting him with the only way to everlasting life.

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FROM whence we may observe by the way, how acceptable a sacrifice a broken heart is to almighty God, and that a broken and a contrite spirit is never despised by him. For this poor man was no sooner humbled for his sins, but he was presently directed how to have them pardoned : he was no sooner truly desirous of salvation, but he was shewn the way to attain it : for so soon as ever he had seriously propounded this question to them, *what must I do to be saved ?* St. Paul gave this full, satisfactory, and infallible answer, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*

BUT, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, might the man say, who is he that I should believe in, and what is it you mean by believing in him ? to this a papist would give a ready answer, that it is to believe as the church believes, right or wrong ; and, if he did but so, he would not miss of salvation. But St. Paul was not of this mind, he would not have him believe with such an implicit faith as the church believed, nor yet as the apostles themselves believed ; as if his believing as they believed could save him, whether he knew what they believed, or no : no, they would have him have an explicit, solid faith, grounded upon the word of God, as is plain from the following verse ; *and they spoke unto him the word of God, and to all that were in his house* : that is, they explained unto him the several articles of the christian faith, which he was to believe. Which clearly shews, that a distinct knowledge of the word of God was necessary to his believing aright in Christ, or else it would have been superfluous to have preached or explained it unto them, as it is expressly said they did, not only to the jailor himself, but likewise to all his house. And therefore these words, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*, are not to be so understood, as if his believing would save all his house, or all that were in his family ; as if he could believe both for himself and them too : but that *thou shalt be saved and thy house*, that is, if thou believest thou shalt be saved, and not only thyself, but thy whole house, thy wife, thy children, thy servants, may be all saved by faith in Christ, as well as thyself ; who oughtest therefore to shew them a good example, by going before them in the way to everlasting life ; and if thou goest before, they will be more easily persuaded to follow after.

AND that this is the proper meaning and purport of the words is plain ; in that when the apostle had told him, if he would *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ he should be saved, and his house*, they presently expounded the word of God, not only to him, but to all that were in his house. For as it was not enough for him to believe as the church believed, so neither was it enough that all that were in his house should believe as the master did ; but they must all believe, every one for himself : and therefore the apostles preached the word equally to them all, one as well as another.

HENCE therefore it is easy to observe, that altho' the apostle had told the jailor, that if he *believed he should be saved*, yet he did not think this one expression enough to bring him to heaven, unless he knew the full meaning of it, which he therefore makes known unto him ; these words being only his text, which he took to open, confirm, and apply unto him. All which questionless he did so effectually, that we have just ground to believe, that the sermon, which the jailor and his family then heard upon this text, was the means of their conversion ; for it is expressly asserted, that he and his were presently baptized, and that he *believed in the Lord with all his house* : and by consequence that they were all saved, according to the apostles words ; and so are now so many glorified saints in the highest heavens.

AND oh ! that it might please the most high God, that these words may have the same effect upon you now, as they had then upon them ; which doubtless they would, was St. Paul but in my stead to explain them unto you. But you can never expect to have St. Austin's wish accomplish'd to you, even to see Christ on the cross, or St. Paul on the pulpit. Howsoever, tho' St. Paul be not here, the word may be as effectual to you as if he was : for it was not his preaching it, but God's blessing upon it, that made it so powerful upon them that heard it. And it is all one with almighty God to work by the weakest, as well as by the strongest means in the world ; by me as well as by St. Paul ; and tho' I cannot pretend to make so divine a discourse upon these words as St. Paul then did, howsoever I shall endeavour to preach the same matter, yea, the same divinity upon them as he did ; for I shall speak nothing to them, but what I shall take out of St. Paul's own writings,

writings, and out of other scriptures, dictated by the same spirit wherewith he was inspired, both when he spake, and when he explained these words. And therefore I hope that you will be as attentive to what you shall hear, as *St. Paul's* hearers then were; and likewise that God, for Christ Jesus sake, will so order it, that you may all be, as they were, converted and saved by hearing these words explained to you, *believe in the Lord, &c.*

In speaking to which words therefore, as I shall not trouble you with any impertinent notions or critical observations upon them, so I must be sure likewise to hide nothing from you, but to give you the full meaning and purport of them. For which end there are two things necessary to be explained in them; whereof the first is, who this Lord Jesus Christ is, whom we ought to believe in; and the other, what it is to believe in him: for he that knows these two things, knows all that the apostle intended in these words, and by consequence whatsoever is necessary for his everlasting salvation.

First, THEREFORE we must consider who this Lord Jesus Christ is. But this you may think to be a very unnecessary and superfluous question; as taking it for granted, that you all know Christ well enough already. But I fear you may be mistaken; for it is very rare to find any one that hath right notions and conceptions of Christ. I do not deny but you may all know that there was such a person once upon earth that was called *Jesus Christ*, that he did many miracles, that he was put to death, and rose again the third day, and then went up to heaven, and the like. But all this you may know, and yet know nothing of Christ, as you ought to know him. The *Corinthians* had heard of Christ as well as you, yea, and were professors of his religion, as you all are; and yet for all that, the great and only thing which *St. Paul* strove to make known unto them was, *Christ and him crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. And, as *St. Paul* there said to them, so may I say to you, that altho' it be too much grown out of fashion with many to preach Christ and him crucified, yet this is the great thing which I determine, and by the blessing of God shall endeavour to make known unto you; as knowing it is impossible for you to come to heaven without believing in Christ, and as impossible to believe in him, unless you know him.

Now there are three things necessary to be known concerning Christ, his person, his offices, and his merits; concerning his person you must know that he was God and man, united together in one and the self-same person.

1. I SAY, he was God, really and truly God, of the self-same nature, substance, wisdom, power and glory with the father; not a creature, as the *Socinians* would make him; not only a made God, and constituted to be so by the father, as the *Arians* asserted; nor only *ὁμοιόσιος*, like to the father in substance, as others have averred; but God co-equal and co-essential, consubstantial, co-eternal, every way the same God with the father. For we may observe all along in scripture, how the same names and properties, the same works and honour, which is given to the father, is in the same manner given to the son too. As the father is called *Jehovah* in scripture, so is the son, *H. f.* i. 7. *בְּיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ*. As the father is called God, so is the son, *John* i. 1. *John* xx. 28. *Rom.* ix. 5. As the father is *alpha* and *omega*, the first and the last, so is the son, *Rev.* i. 8. As the father is eternal, so is the son, *Isa.* ix. 6. As the father is almighty, so is the son, *Hebr.* i. 3. As the father is every where, so is the son, *Matt.* viii. 20. *John* i. 48. As the father knoweth all things, so doth the son, *John* xxi. 17. As the father made all things, so did the son, *John* i. 3. As the father preserves all things, so doth the son, *Heb.* i. 3. As the father forgives sins, so doth the son, *Matt.* ix. 2. As the father is to be worshipped, so is the son, *Hebr.* i. 6. As the father is to be honoured, so is the son, *John* v. 23. No wonder therefore, that Christ, *being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, *Phil.* ii. 6. He did not rob God of any glory by saying that himself was in all things equal to him. The greatest wonder of all is, how any one can believe the scriptures, or at least profess to do so, and yet deny this great truth, that Christ is really and truly God; than which nothing is more frequently, more clearly, more evidently asserted in holy scripture. And if there was no other in all the scriptures, my very text, compared with what follows, is a clear demonstration of it: for here *St. Paul* tells the jailor, that if he *believed in Jesus Christ, he should be saved*; and then expounded to him who this Jesus Christ was. And when he had heard *St. Paul* preaching upon this subject, it is said,

said, that the jailor *believed in God, with all his house*, ver. 34. Which plainly shews, that St. Paul, assisted by the Holy Ghost, convinced the jailor, that that Christ, which he was to believe in, was God: for otherwise, why should he be said to believe in God, who was before advised to believe only in Christ, if believing in Christ, and believing in God, had not been one and the same thing? from whence therefore it is not only certain, that Christ is God, but that it is necessary also that we believe him to be so. For the apostle doubtless did not entertain the jailor with any impertinent discourse, but only with what was necessary for his salvation. But it is plain, that he then told, and proved unto him, that Christ was God: and therefore the belief of this must needs be necessary for our salvation. And the reason is, because unless we believe that Christ is God, we cannot rightly believe him to be our saviour: none being able to free us from our sins, but only he against whom they were committed: nor to satisfy for the offences which we have committed against the infinite God, but he who is himself infinite. And therefore none can doubt of Christ's divinity, and yet expect pardon and salvation from him, all our hopes and expectations from him depending only upon his assumption of our human nature into his divine person, which could not have been, was he not a divine person which did assume it.

2. As he was God, so was he man too: God of the same essence with the father, and man of the same nature with us; equal to the father in every thing, his personal properties only excepted; and like unto us in every thing, our sinful infirmities only excepted. For as he is expressly called God, so he is expressly called man too: *for there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. But I need not stand to prove this, none ever having denied it, but only some few hereticks in the primitive times, who being thoroughly convinced that he was truly God, and not being able to imagine how he should be man too, they fancied him to be man only *ἐν φαντασίᾳ*, not truly man, but only a kind of an apparition in the likeness of man, such a one as the apostles themselves thought him to be after his resurrection, 'till he had convinced them of the contrary, *Luk. xxiv. 36, 37, 38*. And if any of you should doubt how this should be, that he who was God should become man too, you may be satisfied with the answer which the angel gave to the blessed virgin, *Luke. i. 35*.

3. As he was God and man, so he was both God and man in one and the same person; not one person as God, and another person as man, as the *Nestorians* of old thought, but one and the same person, both as God and man. And the reason was, because he did not assume the person of any man, but only the nature of man in general, which had no subsistence out of the divine person who assumed it, and therefore could not constitute a person of itself, distinct from the person of the son; but both the natures, the divine and human, were so united together, as still to constitute but one person. Upon which hypostatical union of our nature to the divine person, the meritoriousness and efficacy of Christ's death depends, because it was the death of him who was truly God, *Acts xx. 28*.

Thus therefore it is, that we should think of Christ as of one who was really and truly God, really and truly man, and yet really and truly but one Christ, or one person, not properly compounded of two natures, but one in whom the divine and human nature were united; not so as to be blended or confounded together, not so united as to make but one nature after their union, as the *Eutychians* affirmed, but so as still to remain two distinct natures, though in one and the same person. Even as in the glorious trinity there be three distinct persons, and yet but one nature; so in Christ there be two distinct natures, and yet but one person.

Now if you do but keep this the true notion of Christ's person in your minds, you will easily apprehend the natures, extent, and end of those offices which he was pleased to undertake and perform for mankind; which now come in the next place to be considered. For which we must know, that his office in general was to be the mediator betwixt God and man, to reconcile God to us, and us to God, and so to be a second *Adam*, raised up to repair the losses which we sustain in the first. For which end it was necessary he should be both God and man, that he might mediate between both parties, and bring them together again, by making up the breach which was betwixt them. For having first united both their natures
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in one person, he was thereby fully and compleatly qualified to unite them together in love and affection too. For the accomplishment whereof he divided his office of mediatorship in general into three particular branches, and undertook to be our priest, our prophet, and our king, which are all imported in the names ordinarily given him in holy scripture, being called *Jesus Christ our Lord*. For his name *Jesus* denotes his priestly office, whereby he saved us from our sins, by offering up himself as a sacrifice for them. His name *Christ*, that is, anointed, imports his being anointed, and sent to be our prophet, to reveal the will and pleasure of his father to us. And then he is called *our Lord*, that is, king and governour, to exercise dominion over us, and so to lead us to everlasting life. But seeing all our expectations from him are grounded upon his execution of these three offices for us, it will be necessary to explain them more particularly to you.

First, THEREFORE, he was our priest, yea, our high priest, constituted and appointed by God himself, *Heb. v. 5, 6.* so that he was a priest not after the Levitical order, which was only a type of his, but *after the order of Melchisedech*, which exceeded the Levitical in several particulars, especially in the continuance of it. For though we read of *Melchisedech's* being the priest of the most high God, *Gen. xiv. 18.* we do not read of his father or mother, of his beginning nor ending; we read of none that preceded him in his priesthood, nor yet of any 'till Christ, that succeeded him, as the priests in the Levitical law succeeded one another, the priesthood being entailed there upon *Aaron's* posterity, and so descending down from father to son, from one generation to another: whereas *Melchisedech* was *without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the son of God, abideth a priest continually*, *Heb. vii. 3.* for so Christ exactly was; without father as to his manhood, without mother as to his godhead; without descent, having no predecessors in his priesthood, nor successors neither, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but he always was, and always will be a priest for ever. And there are two parts of his priestly office which Christ performed for us.

I. HE executed his priestly office for us, by making atonement, propitiation, and satisfaction for our sins, in his own body, by offering up himself as a lamb without spot for a sacrifice to expiate our sins, and so take off our obligations to punishment, which is so plainly asserted in holy scripture, that I cannot but wonder with myself how any one could ever have the confidence to deny it. For it is expressly said, that *Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour*, *Ephes. v. 2.* *He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*, *1 Tim. ii. 6.* And he himself tells us, *he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*, *λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν*, the price of redemption, instead of many, *Matth. xx. 28.* Hence the apostle tells us, that we are justified freely by grace through the redemption that is in *Jesus Christ*, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, *Rom. iii. 24, 25.* for when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. And God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, *Rom. v. 6, 8.* He was wounded for our transgressions, and the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all, *Isa. liii. 5, 6.* His soul was made an offering for sin, *ver. 10.* Hence the apostle proves his priestly office, from his offering up himself as a sacrifice for sin, *Hebr. ix. 26, 28.* Chap. x. 12. By all which, and many other such like places in holy scripture as might easily be produced, it plainly appears, that Christ did not die only to confirm his doctrine, and shew us an example of patience, humility, and self-denial, as the *Socinians*, *Photinians*, *Samosatenians*, and other hereticks have asserted, but that he died really as a sacrifice for our sins, and in our stead, so as to satisfy the justice of God, and pay that debt which otherwise would have been required of us.

AND indeed this is the ground and foundation of all our hopes and expectations from Christ: take away this, and our whole religion will fall to the ground; for God hath threaten'd death against all sinners, and unless Christ hath suffered that death for us, we still are, and always shall be subject to it, and so do what we can we must of necessity perish unto all eternity. But blessed be the name of the most high God for it, as there is no truth more necessary to be known, so neither is there any truth more clearly revealed in holy scripture than this is, that

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Christ died to make atonement and propitiation for our sins ; so that none can possibly deny it, without the most palpable contradiction to the whole tenure of the gospel.

AND verily if you do but consider who Christ was, even one who was both God and man in one person, you may easily apprehend him every way qualified to satisfy God's justice for man's sins, which no person ever was or could be capable of doing but himself. For every sin being committed against an infinite God, doth thereby deserve infinite punishment ; which infinite punishment all the creatures in the world could never undergo, because they are but finite. And therefore to pay the debts which were owing, or suffer the punishments which were due from man to God, it was absolutely necessary that he who undertook it should be *Emanuel*, God with us, or God and man. For if he was not man, he would not be capable of being bound for us ; if he was not God, he would not be able to pay our debt. It was man that had offended, and therefore man must have suitable punishment laid upon him : but it was God that was offended, and therefore God must have sufficient satisfaction made unto him ; which could never be made but by one who was both God and man. For if he was not man, he could not suffer at all ; if he was not God too, he could not suffer enough to make it satisfactory. In brief, take this great mystery in these few and perspicuous terms. Man can suffer, but he cannot satisfy : God can satisfy, but he cannot suffer ; and therefore to make one capable of suffering, so as to satisfy God by what he suffers, he must of necessity be both God and man, and that in one person too, as Christ was. For if the man who suffered was a distinct person from God, then his sufferings could be no more than the sufferings of a man, a finite creature, and so not able to satisfy for the sins committed against the infinite creator ; but Christ being both God and man in one person, by virtue of this personal or hypostatical union of the human nature to the divine in one person ; hence all the sufferings, which he underwent, were the sufferings of an infinite person, and so very satisfactory to infinite justice ; because, tho' the nature wherein he suffered was but finite, yet the person that suffered in that nature was infinite. By which means it comes to pass, that the sufferings of Christ were more satisfactory to the justice of God, than if all the creatures in the world had suffered death to eternity ; because all these together were but finite, whereas he alone is infinite, and so suffered as much as infinite justice itself could possibly require of us.

THUS therefore it was, that Christ, as our priest, made satisfaction to God's justice for our sins when he was upon earth, and therefore is now making intercession to his mercy for our souls in heaven, which is the other part of his priestly office, which the apostle lays the main stress of our salvation upon, *Heb. vii. 25.* because the application of the merits of his death and passion to us depends upon this his intercession for us. For as it was typically represented in the old law, the high priest once a year having killed the sacrifice, he took some of the blood, and with that entered into the holy of holies, and there made atonement for the people : so Christ having offered up himself as a sacrifice for our sins, he with his own blood went into the holy of all holies, into heaven itself, and there appears for us before the most high God, as our saviour, mediator and advocate, *1 John. ii. 1.*

2. THE second office, which Christ performeth for us, is the prophetical ; for he was a prophet as well as a priest : as he was a priest to expiate our sins, so was he a prophet to acquaint us with our duty, *Deut. xviii. 15. Acts iii. 22.* By virtue of this office it was that he hath made known the will and pleasure of his father to mankind in all ages since the world began : in the old testament by the patriarchs and prophets, by visions and dreams, and the like ; and sometimes by immediate revelations. After that he came down in his own person, and acquainted mankind with whatsoever they were bound to believe or do, in order to their salvation by him. And when he was to leave this world, and return to his father again, he gave commission to his apostles to do the same, *Matth. xxviii. 19.* and promised them, that *he would be with them to the end of the world* : which shews, that the Commission he then granted to the apostles, was to be continued to all succeeding ministers, as it is to this day ; for by virtue of the command and promise which he then made, you hear so much of Christ at this time, and of the things that belong to your everlasting salvation, and so questionless mankind will do to the end of the world, maugre all the opposition that men or devils

devils can make against it. Neither doth he only teach men outwardly by the ministers of his word, but inwardly also by the operation of his spirit, as, I hope, many of you have found by experience already, and will still find more and more.

THE last office which Christ undertook, and still performeth for us, is the kingly office; for he is called *a king*, Psal. ii. 6. and elsewhere *the king of kings*; yea, *all power is given unto him in heaven and earth*, Matth. xxviii. 18. which is to be understood only of the human nature, as he was man; for as God, nothing could be given to him, or taken from him. But his very human nature, by virtue of its assumption into the divine person, is now exalted over all the creatures of the world, so that he always did, and still doth exercise power, dominion, and authority, over all the creatures in the world, and the angels themselves both good and bad; and the souls of men are subject to him, as well as their bodies, *Phil. ii. 10, 11*. By virtue of this office it is, that he prescribeth laws to mankind, and distributeth his punishments and rewards, according as they neglect or obey what he hath prescribed, condemning those that disobey him to everlasting torments, and conferring eternal happiness upon all that obey his gospel.

THESE therefore are the three offices which Jesus Christ hath undertaken and executed for mankind, and none but he. *Melchisedech* was a king and a priest, *Samuel* a priest and prophet, *David* a king and prophet, but none but Christ ever was or ever will be both king, priest, and prophet too, nor yet such a king, such a priest, nor such a prophet as he is, so as to accomplish whatsoever was necessary to be done, in order to our salvation, as he hath done; who is therefore truly said to be both the *author and finisher of our faith*, as well as of our salvation, *Hebr. xii. 2*.

WHICH that we may the better understand, we must in the last place consider the merits of Jesus Christ, or the benefits which may or do accrue unto us by reason of what he hath done and suffered for us. For seeing the son of God himself was pleased to do and suffer so much as he hath done upon our account; we must needs conclude, that it was not for a little or no purpose, but that there is more in it than we are aware of. That the son of God should become the son of man, that our human nature should be assumed into his divine person, that he that made the world should be made into it; that he that was in the form of God should take upon him the likeness of a servant; that eternity should stoop to time, and heaven come down to dwell upon earth; that the glorious son of righteousness itself should be spit upon by worms, that justice itself should be condemned, omnipotence derided, happiness be in misery, and life itself be put to death; even that Christ, the only begotten son of God, God co-equal with the father, that he should not only become man, but should also suffer such conflicts and agonies, such contempt and derision, such grief and pain, such an ignominious, accursed and cruel death as he hath suffered from his own creatures; who is able to think of it without wonder and amazement? certainly this could never have been but upon some extraordinary account indeed. And the benefits which he hath merited for us in such an astonishing way as this was, cannot but be like himself, infinite and unspeakable. And therefore expect not that I should describe them perfectly unto you: that is more than men or angels can ever do. Howsoever I shall endeavour to give you some dark intimations of them as well as I can, that you may understand so much at least of the meritoriousness and efficacy of Christ's death, and of the glorious privileges that he hath purchased for you with his own blood, that you may be persuaded without any more ado to close with him, and to observe what he hath enjoined, in order to your partaking of his merits and mediation.

First, THEREFORE, Christ by his death hath merited and procured pardon and remission of sins for all such as repent and believe his gospel; which is such a benefit to mankind, that the very remembrance of it should make our hearts even leap within us: for by reason of our sins committed against the eternal God, we are all condemned to eternal death, and are every moment obnoxious to it. Neither is it possible for us to avoid it by any thing which we ourselves can either do or suffer; no grief or sorrow, no contrition or repentance, no virtue or obedience, no pious, no charitable, no good works whatsoever being able to expiate the least of the many and great sins which we are guilty of, so that we can have no expectations at all of pardon from what ourselves do, how specious and plausible soever it may appear. But our comfort is, that what we could never have done ourselves

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Christ hath done most effectually for us. For by offering up himself as a sacrifice for our sins, he hath thereby made such satisfaction to almighty God for them, that none of us but in and through him may obtain perfect remission and forgiveness of whatsoever we have hitherto done against God: for *in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace*, Eph. i. 7. And elsewhere, *in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*, Colos. i. 14. And many such like places there are in holy scripture, wherein we have as much assurance as God himself can give us, that if we sincerely repent and believe in Christ, all the sins that ever we committed against God shall be remitted by God to us, so as never to rise up in judgment against us. Now what an unspeakable mercy and privilege is this, that whatsoever sins you know yourselves to be guilty of against the supreme governour, the universal monarch of the whole world, may be all pardoned and forgiven to you.

AND though this be exceeding much, yet it is not all neither. For in the next place, besides the remission of your former sins in and through Christ, you may be all made truly and sincerely holy, real saints, not such as the pope canonizeth, but such as God himself will canonize, so as to accept of you, and enrol your names in the catalogue of saints in heaven. For Christ by his death did not only merit pardon, but grace for you; so that you may not only be justified by his merit imputed to you, but sanctified also by his spirit implanted in you; so as to have both perfect forgiveness of your former sins, and sufficient power against sin for the future. For this was one of the principal ends of his coming into the world, *even to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. and he was therefore called *Jesus*, because he was *to save his people from their sins*, Matth. i. 21. Not only from their guilt, but likewise from the filth and power of sin. And therefore he is said to be made our *sanctification*, as well as *righteousness*, 1 Cor. i. 30. because by him we may be made sincerely holy in ourselves, as well as accepted of as such in him. And although we cannot expect to be perfect in this life, but there will be still some relique of sin within us, whereby our best duties and works will be polluted, yet howsoever God, for Christ's sake, will accept of our evangelical sincerity, instead of legal perfection. Now what an unspeakable comfort is this to all of you, that how strong and prevalent soever your sins have been, or still are, you may have them all subdued under you, and all true grace and virtue infused into you, by virtue of that blood which Christ shed for you, whereby your dark minds may be so enlighten'd, your erring judgments so informed, your sleepy consciences so awaken'd, your perverse wills so rectified, your disorderly affections so ordered, your strong sins so weaken'd, your weak graces so strengthened, your sinful souls wholly sanctified, so as to be fit companions for glorified saints and angels in the world to come.

AND that brings me to the last thing which Christ hath merited for us, even everlasting happiness and salvation in the life to come, which is but the necessary consequent of the two former benefits that he hath purchased for us; for if our sins, which only can keep us out of heaven, be pardoned, and our corruptions, which make us incapable of enjoying heaven, be cleansed away, so that we are made really and truly holy in all manner of conversation, here it follows in course, that we shall be really and truly happy in all manner of perfection hereafter; eternal happiness being certainly entailed upon evangelical holiness and piety in this life. And therefore if you would know in short what Christ hath done for you; in plain terms he hath made way for you all to go to heaven: insomuch that there is never a soul amongst you, how sinful soever heretofore you have been, how poor and needy, how simple and ignorant, how vile and despicable soever you still are, but who may by Christ be advanced above yonder glorious sun, and the stars themselves. So that you may all as really be admitted hereafter into the church above, as you are now in this below; and as certainly see Christ shining in all his glory, with all the saints and angels attending of him, as you now see me, or one another. In a word; by Christ you may all as certainly be glorified saints in heaven, as you are now sinful creatures upon earth.

BUT then you'll say, it is true, we all believe that Christ hath merited salvation for mankind: but the great question is, what we must do that we in particular may be saved by him? To which I answer with the apostle in my text, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved*.

SERMON CXXXIII.

Salvation wholly owing to Faith in Christ.

ACTS xvi. 31.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

HAVING thus considered the object of saving-faith, even our Lord Jesus Christ, we are now to consider the act of faith itself, or what it is to beleve. That knowing now who is that Christ whom we ought to believe in, we may know likewise what it is to believe in him, so as that we may be saved; or what it was St. Paul meant when he said, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* For faith in Christ being not only the most certain, but the only way to get to heaven, we can never expect to come thither, unless we believe; but we can never believe in Christ aright, unless we first know what it is to do so. And it is not so easy to know this, as it is commonly thought to be; men ordinarily taking their profession of the christian faith to be all the faith in Christ which is required of them. As if the very naming of his name were sufficient to entitle them to all his merits without any more ado. But heark what our saviour himself saith to such persons as these, *not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven,* Matth. vii. 21. And if a man may speak this reverently of Christ, and pray thus fervently to him, and yet not get to heaven, a man may then most certainly do all this, and yet not believe: for all that truly believe are sure to go to heaven, as the apostle here certifies the jailor, saying, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*

BUT all you, who are here present, I am confident, desire to be saved; and am as confident that you can never attain your desires without Christ, nor by him, without believing in him; and therefore you are all equally concerned to understand what this believing in Christ is, upon which your eternal happiness and salvation doth so much depend. And do not say within yourselves, nor fancy that you believe already; for I assure you many have been as confident that they have believed, as any of you either are or can be, and yet have been most fearfully mistaken. For Christ himself hath told you, that many shall presume so much upon their faith in him, as to say to his face, *Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?* Matth. vii. 22. Oh how confident would you be of your believing in the name of Christ, if you could do such things as these are in it! And yet you know what answer they shall receive from Christ, even nothing else but an angry protestation, that he

he doth not know them ; and therefore will say unto them, *depart from me, ye that work iniquity*, ver. 23. What a sad and fearful thing will it be, should any of you, who hear me at this time, be in these mens cases; that after all your professions of the gospel, and pretences to faith in Christ, Christ himself should say unto you, *depart from me, for I know you not* : and yet there is no way in the world for you to escape this dreadful sentence, but by believing aright in him ; which notwithstanding you can never do, unless you understand first how to do it.

THAT therefore you may not plead ignorance at the day of judgment, nor yet accuse me for being unfaithful to you in not acquainting you with the true nature of this work, which is so indispensibly necessary for you all to perform, or else be undone for ever, I shall endeavour to explain it clearly and fully to you. For as I would not be deceived myself, so neither would I have you be deceived in a matter of such consequence as this. And therefore I have searched very narrowly into the true nature and notion of it, that so I might both satisfy myself, and certify you what that is which the apostle here, and the gospel all along, calls *believing in Jesus Christ* ; or what that faith really is, whereby alone our persons can be justified, and our souls saved. Which being my only design, I shall not trouble you with impertinent discourses concerning any other kinds of faith, as they are usually termed ; as an historical faith, a temporary faith, a faith of miracles, or the like. For whether these be distinct species of faith, or no, be sure it is acknowledged by all, that such a faith as riseth no higher than what is meant by those expressions, can never bring a soul to heaven. And therefore I shall not discourage your attention with treating of them, but shall speak only of that faith of such a believing in Jesus Christ, whereby the apostle here tells us we may be saved ; which is therefore commonly called a *justifying or saving faith*.

Now making diligent enquiry into the true nature of this faith, I find two very dangerous opinions concerning it : the one is of the *Socinians*, the other of the papists ; which I should not mention (because I love not to trouble either you or myself with controversies) but that they are both of very pernicious consequence, and as much contrary to the true nature of faith, as they are to one another. And if any of you should be prepossessed with either of these two extreme opinions, it will be very hard and difficult to reconcile you to the true one.

First, THEREFORE, the *Socinians*, together with the *Samosatenians*, hold, that justifying or saving faith is nothing else but obedience sincerely performed to the law of God ; so that good works are not the fruit of faith, but constitute the very form and essence of it. But this directly contradicts the very notion of faith in general, which the apostle describes to be *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen* ; which cannot possibly be said of obedience without manifest absurdity. And, besides that, the scripture all along distinguisheth betwixt faith and obedience, as two distinct things ; as where our saviour saith, *repent and believe the gospel*, Mark i. 15. where repentance doth plainly comprize under it, not only our aversion from sin, but likewise our conversion unto God, and by consequence sincere and universal obedience to all his laws and commands ; and yet it is plain, that our saviour here enjoins us to believe his gospel, as a distinct duty from our repentance, or obedience to the law. And the apostle reckons up *faith, hope, and charity*, as three distinct graces, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. But elsewhere the same apostle tells us, that *love or charity is the fulfilling of the whole law*. And therefore nothing can be more plain, than that faith was really a distinct thing from obedience in the apostle's account. Indeed they differ as much as the cause and effect do : for faith is the instrumental cause whereby we are enabled to perform obedience ; for it is by it that our hearts are purified, *Acts* xv. 9. yea, and they have different objects too ; for obedience respects only the commands, but faith looks only to the promises of God made to us in Jesus Christ. Hence, although faith be always accompanied with obedience and good works, so as that it can never be without them, yet in the matter of our justification it is always opposed against them by St. Paul, *Rom.* iii. 28. *Gal.* ii. 16. And indeed to look to be justified by such a faith, which is the same with obedience, or, which is all one, to be justified by our obedience to the law of God, is to take off all our hopes and expectations from Christ, and to place them upon ourselves, and our own performances.

formances. So that we may thank ourselves, and not Christ, or at least we may thank ourselves, as well as Christ, if our sins be ever pardoned, or our persons justified before God. And therefore this notion of faith overthrows the very basis and foundation of the christian religion, making our salvation to depend altogether upon our obedience, without any respect at all to Christ.

BUT there are two or three places of scripture, which they would persuade the world do very much favour their opinion; such especially where mention is made of the *obedience of faith*, Rom. i. 5. chap. xvi. 26. But such places are so far from proving that opinion, that they quite overthrow it: for if it be the obedience of faith, it cannot be faith itself; though, to speak truly, faith here is not that *fides quâ creditur*, that faith whereby we believe; but the *fides quæ creditur*, the doctrine of faith which is believed. So that the obedience of faith is that obedience which the doctrine of faith, or the gospel, requires; which is therefore called elsewhere *the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. x. 5. and *the obedience of the truth*, 1 Pet. i. 22. Not subjectively, as if Christ or the truth were the subjects of our obedience, but objectively, because our obedience is performed to Christ, and his truth, and so to the faith which he requires of us. And in that sense, I confess, there is obedience in every act of faith, because he that believes, obeys the command of Christ, enjoining him to believe. But this is only one act of obedience to one particular command; and therefore cannot with any shew of reason be called obedience in general; which comprizes under it an universal conformity of all our lives and actions, to all the laws and commands of God. Neither indeed is it the *to credere*, that obedience which we perform to Christ, by believing in him: it is not this, I say, whereby we can be justified or saved; for then our justification and salvation would be wholly ascribed to something within ourselves, and not to Christ; or, in plain terms, we should be justified by our own merits, and not by his; which plainly contradicts the whole tenure of the gospel, and the grand design of Christ's coming into the world, and of all that he hath done or suffered for us. And therefore, all things considered, although, as I shall prove anon, true faith can never be separated from good works; or, as they call it, from obedience, yet it is plainly another, and a distinct thing from it, and cannot be confounded with it, without manifest prejudice to Christ, and contradiction to his gospel.

THE other false and erroneous opinion concerning faith is that of the papists, who confidently assert, that it is sufficient for salvation, if a man hath but such an implicit faith, whereby he becomes a son of the catholick church; and believes as she believes, whether he knows what she believes or no; which is such a monster of faith for a man to believe he knows not what, that it may justly be termed atheism, or irreligion, rather than faith: for all faith supposes an assent to something, which is known to be testified by another: but an implicit faith, as they call it, supposes nothing particularly known to be so testified; and so there is nothing of faith in it, because it hath no particular object which it assents to: for he that believes only as the church believes, without knowing what that is, such a one believes nothing that he knows of, and so hath indeed no faith at all of his own, whereby he can be saved; and therefore, if he ever be saved, it must be by the faith of another, yea, of many others, even of the catholick church, though he doth not know what that is neither, only he believes it to be the church of *Rome*. And therefore such a one may be said indeed to believe in the pope, or in the church, but he can never be said to believe in Christ, as the apostle here enjoins the jailor to do: he doth not bid him believe as the church believes, nor believe as the apostles believe, but *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*.

BUT to this the papists object, that if an implicit faith be not sufficient to salvation, then it is necessary for a man to know, and clearly to understand, all the mysteries in the gospel, before he can believe them; but that is impossible for any man to do. But this the main prop, yea, chief foundation whereupon they build their implicit faith, will be easily removed, if you do but consider, that the knowledge, requisite to a true faith, is not such a comprehensive knowledge whereby a man clearly understands the things he believes, as they are in themselves; for that would not be properly faith, but science or vision, which can never be expected 'till we come to heaven; but such a knowledge whereby we know such mysteries to be revealed by God, and so they are the proper objects of a divine faith, because

cause testified by divine authority. So that it is not the reason of the thing, but the testimony of God, that induceth us to believe. And did the papists mean no more than this, that it is not necessary for a man to know the reason of the thing in order to his believing of it, we should easily grant it: for no man can possibly understand the reason of all the gospel mysteries. And therefore the *Socinians* err as much on the one hand, as the papists do on the other. For as the papists hold, that no knowledge at all is necessary to a saving faith, not so much as to know such things to be revealed and testified by God; so the *Socinians*, on the other hand, they plead for such a knowledge as is fetched from the inward reason of the thing; such as we have by reason and demonstration in philosophical matters. And this is the reason they deny the sacred trinity, the divinity and incarnation of Christ, together with the meritoriousness and efficacy of his death and passion; because they would make reason the only judge of these great mysteries. And because they cannot comprehend them, therefore they will not believe them; and by consequence act not like christians, but philosophers, searching out the internal principles and reasons of things: whereas the christian faith requires us to believe what God saith, only because he saith it, without ever troubling our heads with the reasons of it; which be sure we shall never perfectly understand whilst we are here below. But though it be not necessary for us to know the reason of what God saith, yet it is necessary for us to know that he saith it; otherwise how is it possible for us to believe it because he saith it, if we do not know whether ever he said it, or no.

THIS therefore is that knowledge which is necessary to true faith, even that we know such and such things to be attested by God; without which our faith will be but a mere implicit faith, and so no true faith at all.

FOR, that such a knowledge as this is absolutely necessary to true faith, you will all grant, if you do but consider, first, the apostle's words, *how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?* Rom. x. 14. From which words nothing can be more plain, than that, in order to our believing in Christ, it is indispensibly necessary, that we first hear of him; and so know what is asserted by God, and so what is to be believed by us concerning him. Hence the same apostle tells us, that *faith cometh by hearing*, Rom. x. 17. because hearing the word of God is the ordinary means whereby we come to the knowledge of those things which we ought to believe: whereas if an implicit faith could bring a soul to heaven, if a man could be saved, although he be altogether ignorant of him by whom alone he can be saved: if so, to what end were the scriptures written? wherefore are they preached? for what need you read or hear the word of God, if you could be saved without it, or without knowing what is in it? but whatsoever they, who profess themselves of the catholick church, pretend, I am sure Christ himself commands us all to search the scriptures; and that upon this very account too, that we might know what is there testified of him, *Joh. v. 39*. But why should he command that, if it was not necessary for us to know what is testified of him, in order to our right believing in him?

MOREOVER, our saviour himself elsewhere tells the *Sadducees*, that *they erred, not knowing the scriptures*, Matt. xxii. 29. And therefore ignorance of the scriptures is so far from being the mother of faith and devotion, as the papists hold, that it is indeed the mother of error and delusion. So that it is impossible to be grossly ignorant, and yet truly devout at the same time; impossible to believe as we ought, unless we first know what we ought to believe.

AND therefore, as our saviour justly blamed the *Samaritans*, because they worshipped they knew not what, *Joh. iv. 22*. so may they be justly blamed too, who believe they know not what; who profess indeed to believe as the church believes, without knowing what it is which the church believes, and so without knowing what themselves believe.

BUT to prove this, that in order to our believing in Christ aright it is needful for us to know what is asserted of him in the holy scriptures, I needed not to have gone so far; for my text itself, compared with what follows, is a sufficient demonstration of it. For when the apostle had enjoined the jailor to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it presently follows in the next verse; *and they spake unto him the word of God, and to all that were in his house*. He first told him, that

that he must believe in Christ, and then he acquainted him who that Christ was, whom he ought to believe in. And it is probable, that when the apostle had told him, that he must believe in Christ, he presently asked the question, who that Christ was? to which the apostle doth not answer as a Jesuit would, that it was no matter who it was; it was not necessary for him to know that; no, the apostle told him who he was, and explained the word of God to him, that so he might know what he was to believe, that he might be saved. This was the method which the apostle took to direct the jailor to eternal happiness; not only telling him in general that he must believe, but acquainting him in particular with what he ought to believe concerning Christ, and with what was testified of him in the word of God.

FROM what we have hitherto discoursed, it is easy to observe, not only the falshood of the forementioned opinions concerning faith, but likewise what is the first thing necessarily required to it, even knowledge; which is so great a part of faith, that it is often put for the whole, *Joh. xvii. 3. Isa. liii. 11. by his knowledge, saith God, my righteous servant shall justify many*; that is, many shall be justified by knowing of him; which could not be, unless knowing of him was the same thing with believing in him, to which our justification is always ascribed in the new testament. And the reason why the knowing Christ is so often put for believing in him is, because as none can believe in him that do not first know him, so neither can any one be said truly to know him that doth not believe in him: or howsoever, knowledge being so frequently put for faith, we may thence most certainly conclude, that true faith in Christ cannot possibly consist with gross ignorance of him; and by consequence, that the first thing, which you are to endeavour after in order to your believing in Christ, so that you may be saved by him, is a clear and distinct knowledge of what is revealed and recorded concerning him in the holy scriptures; which were written for this very purpose and end, that you might know what to believe, *Joh. xx. 31*. And whatsoever you read there concerning Christ would have been written in vain, and to no purpose, was it not necessary for you to know it, in order to your believing in it. But what is usually said of nature may be much better applied to God, even that he doth nothing in vain. And therefore we may justly conclude, that he had a special and gracious end in causing the life and miracles, the sayings and sufferings of Christ, together with his nature, offices, and merits to be revealed and recorded in writing for all generations to read; and that was only that all might thereby know what to believe concerning him: and until you do this, it is in vain to speak of believing.

AND therefore, as ever you desire to believe in Christ aright, so as to have your sins pardoned, your persons justified, and your souls eternally saved by him, your first work must be to learn who he was, what he did, how and why he suffered, and what is said of him in the word of God; and what God hath for his sake promised to all those that sincerely obey and serve him. For this knowledge of him is the first step to faith in him; and so the first thing to be endeavoured after by all such among you, as really desire to obtain eternal happiness and salvation in and thro' Christ's merits and mediation.

SUPPOSING, therefore, that you all have advanced so far towards faith, that you all know what is said of Christ in holy scripture, according as I have endeavoured to explain it to you; the next thing to be done, in order to your believing, is to give firm and full assent to what you know. And as your knowledge is, so ought your assent to be. As it is not necessary for you to know the reason of what is said in the scriptures, it is sufficient that you know it to be there said. So also for your assent, it must not be moved by any philosophical arguments or demonstrations, drawn from the reason of the thing; for then it would not be faith, but knowledge, or science, strictly so called: but our assent must be grounded only upon the testimony of God, even as an human faith is that whereby we assent to any thing which a man speaketh to merely upon his word; as believing him both to know the truth of what he saith, and to be faithful in delivering it unto us. So that it is properly a divine faith, when we assent to any assertion or proposition, because attested or asserted by God himself, who cannot lie. Upon which account we have more ground to believe what he saith, than we have to believe what we perceive

perceive by sense, or gather by reason and discourse: for our senses may deceive us, and so may our reason, but God cannot. And therefore, although matters of sense and reason may seem more evident to us, yet matters of faith, or such things as are asserted by God, the supreme verity, are far more credible than the other, because attested by a divine and infallible authority.

Now these things being rightly considered, it is easy to observe what kind of faith we ought to have in the word of God in general; which will give much light to that particular faith which we ought to have in Christ: for seeing the scriptures are God's word, and so every thing in them hath a divine authority enstamped upon it, it follows hence, that whatsoever we read in scripture we are so firmly to believe, as not to doubt of the truth and certainty of it: insomuch that God always did, and ever will, expect from his creatures, that they be fully persuaded in themselves of the truth of what he saith, merely because he saith it, so as to take his bare word and testimony for it.

BUT because this notion, so duly improved, will conduce very much to your right understanding of that which the scriptures call faith, or believing in God and Christ, I shall further explain it to you in several instances from holy scriptures: first, God, you know, told *Noah*, that he would utterly *destroy all flesh from off the face of the earth*, and therefore bad him prepare an ark wherein to secure himself and family, *Gen. vi. 14, 17*. *Noah* having received this notice from God himself, he did not at all doubt of the certainty of it, but without any more ado, in expectation of the flood which God had foretold, he immediately set upon the work which was commanded him, although by computation it was an hundred years before it was accomplished. From whom we may observe the nature as well as the strength of his faith; for having the word of God for it, he was so certain of it, that neither the length of time, nor the many difficulties which he was likely to meet with in it, could in the least discourage him from setting presently upon the work which was enjoined him, whereby *he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*, *Heb. xi. 7*.

THUS *Abraham* having received a promise from God that he should have a son, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, he was so fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of it, that although, for the trial of his faith, he was afterwards commanded to slay his very son, yet he readily obeyed, as believing it impossible for God to lie. And therefore, whatsoever his command was, he was sure his promise would be made good; for which reason he is said to be *strong in faith, giving glory to God*, *Rom. iv. 20*. And indeed we may justly admire the height and strength of *Abraham's* faith in this particular, who was so confident of the truth of God's word, that though God himself seemed to have changed his mind, yet he could not doubt in the least but that his word would be most certainly fulfilled. This was right believing indeed, and that which the scripture recommends to us as a pattern and example to walk by.

THUS when God had appeared to *Moses*, and had promised to be with him and assist him, in bringing the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, and had told him that he should do signs and miracles only with the wand that was in his hand, *Exod. iv. 17*. he so firmly believed the word of God, that only by stretching forth the rod in his hand he turned the rivers into blood, the dust into lice, and the day into palpable darkness. He, with that, brought frogs and flies, and many other plagues, upon *Pharaoh* and his people. Yea, with that, he *divided the red Sea*, *Exod. xiv. 21*. And that all this was done by the strength of his faith, is plain from that passage in *Numbers*, chap. xx. which in short was this: the people murmuring for want of water, God bad *Moses* take the rod, and together with *Aaron* speak to the rock, and that should bring forth water, in the presence of the people. *Moses* and *Aaron* accordingly gathered the congregation together, and said, *ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock*, ver. 10. Here *Moses's* faith began to fail, in saying, *must we do it*, when God had told him plainly he should do it: and then *he smote the rock twice*, ver. 11. which was another instance of his infidelity; for in that he seemed to doubt that once striking of it would not serve the turn, although God had said it should. Upon which God told them, that they did not now believe him aright, nor sanctify him before the people, and therefore they should not enter into the land of *Canaan*, ver. 12. From whence we

may observe, that while *Moses* and *Aaron* remained confident of his word, so long God looked upon them as believing him; but when once they expressed the least shadow of doubting, then he was presently angry with them, as not believing him as they ought: so that he plainly expected from them, and so from all others, that whatsoever he saith be firmly believed, without any hesitancy at all.

As we plainly see *Joshua* did. For God having told *Joshua*, that if he and his people compassed the city *Jericho* seven days, and upon the seventh day should make a long blast with rams horns, then upon the shouting of the people the walls should fall down flat, *Josh. vi. 3, 4, 5*. Now, though rams horns might seem but sorry weapons to batter down strong walls with, neither was it very probable that the people could blow them down with their breath, when they shouted; yet *Joshua*, notwithstanding, being fully persuaded of God's truth and faithfulness to his word, went on, and did as God commanded him, steadfastly believing, that how weak soever the means might seem, yet being managed by omnipotence itself, they could not but prove effectual; as in the issue you know they did.

Thus I might instance in most of the patriarchs and prophets of the old testament, and shew what a strange confidence they had in the word of God, howsoever revealed to them. But that you may not think this to be only the faith of the old testament, I shall shew how the same is both commended to, and commanded us in the new.

First, THEREFORE, you read, *Matt. xxiv.* that when Jesus was walking on the sea, *Peter* said to him, *Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water; and he said, come,* ver. 28, 29. that is, come and walk on the water as I do. Christ having said this, *Peter* at first strongly confided in it, and did indeed walk on the water; but afterwards being afraid of the storm, he began to sink, and prayed Christ to save him, ver. 30. and Christ having taken him up, said, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* ver. 31. From whence we may clearly see what kind of faith it was, which Christ required of him, even such a faith whereby he should so firmly have believed Christ's word, as not to fear any storms or tempests, nor doubt of Christ's enabling him to do what he had bidden him.

AND such a faith it was which the woman of *Canaan* had, who being fully persuaded from God, that Christ both could and would cure her daughter, altho' Christ seemed at first to refuse her, saying, *it is not meet to take the childrens bread, and cast it to dogs,* *Matth. xv. 26*. Yet she persisting in her suit, and confidently replying, *truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters table,* ver. 27. Christ presently answered, *O woman, great is thy faith! be it to thee as thou wilt,* ver. 28.

FROM whence we may observe two things.

First, THAT Christ himself called this woman's confidence in him, *great faith*.

AND, secondly, that her faith being so strong, her request could not be denied; *be it to thee even as thou wilt*; as if nothing could be denied, or withstand a strong and real faith, as our saviour himself tells his disciples again, *Matth. xvii. 19, 20*. And, to put it out of all doubt, he saith elsewhere, *have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them,* *Mark xi. 22, 23, 24*. How was it possible for our blessed Lord to have expressed himself more clearly and fully in this particular, than he doth here: he first bids us have faith in God, and then explains what he means by faith; even such a faith as is opposite to all manner of doubting and hesitancy whatsoever, so as to be fully persuaded in ourselves, that God will most certainly do whatsoever we desire that is good for us.

I SHOULD not have insisted so long upon this, but that it is a thing very rarely if ever before observed, and yet I know nothing that conduced more to our clear understanding the right nature of saving faith, than this doth; for from the afore-said examples, and assertions of the holy scripture, it is plain, that that faith which God requires of us, is not a mere intellectual assent to the word of God as true in general, but that there is likewise in it a full persuasion and firm confidence

fidence of the truth and certainty of whatsoever God hath promised or asserted in it ; which likewise might be further proved ; *first*, from the words which the Holy Ghost useth whereby to express this duty to us ; for it is called sometimes *πεισθῆσις*, a *persuasion*, Rom. viii. 38. sometimes *πλεροφορία*, a *full persuasion*, Rom. iv. 21. sometimes *παρρησία*, *boldness and confidence*, Eph. iii. 12. Hebr. iii. 6. Yea, it is call'd *ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος ὁ βλεπομένων*, the *substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. that is, faith makes what we hope for to subsist in a manner in us, and be present already with us ; so that we are as fully persuaded that we shall have them, as if we had them already in possession : yea, it is the evidence and demonstration of things not seen, making us as certain of them, as if we really saw them before our eyes.

Secondly, This appears also, in that faith in scripture is ordinarily opposed to fear and diffidence, as, *be not afraid, only believe*, Mark v. 36. *But let him ask in faith*, saith St. James, *nothing wavering*, or nothing doubting, Jam. i. 6. And what St. James calls there *praying in faith*, St. Paul expresseth by *lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. From whence it is plain, that faith in a scripture sense is opposed to doubting and fear.

NAY, *thirdly*, although scripture were silent, reason itself cannot but dictate this great truth to us, that whatsoever the supreme being of the world, who is truth itself, saith, ought to be received with the highest confidence imaginable ; so that we can never be too confident of the infallible certainty of every thing that he either asserts or promiseth to us. For, as the apostle tells us, *God cannot lie*, every lie or falsehood being a contradiction to his very nature or essence. And therefore it is impossible for us to have so much ground to believe any thing in the world besides, as we have to be fully persuaded of the truth of every thing that is attested by him. And hence it is, that whatsoever we have God's word for, he expects that we neither doubt the certainty, nor fear the performance of it, but that we be fully persuaded in ourselves, that what he commands is good, what he saith is true, and that whatsoever he hath promised, shall most certainly be fulfilled, not doubting in the least of it, because it is he that hath commanded, said, and promised it. And so near as we come to this, so far we may be said, in a scripture-sense, to believe, and no further.

Now the nature of a divine faith in general being thus cleared, it is easy to observe what is that particular faith which you and I must have, in order to our being justified and saved by Christ. For as the most high God hath been pleased to reveal many great and mysterious truths to us in the holy scriptures, which the divine light of nature could never have discovered ; and though it be beyond our shallow capacities to comprehend them, we are therefore to believe them, because God asserts them, so as not to doubt in the least of the truth and certainty of them. So likewise he hath been pleased, of his infinite mercy to fallen man, to make us many gracious and faithful promises of pardon and salvation, if we sincerely repent, and do what we can to walk in newness of life. But all these promises are made and confirmed to us only in and through Christ, as the apostle testifieth, saying, that *all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen* ; that is, in him they are most sure and certain to all that lay hold of them, 2 Cor. i. 20. Hence therefore, as we are to be fully persuaded in ourselves of the truth of God's word in general, so likewise are we in a particular manner to be fully persuaded in ourselves of the truth and faithfulness of these promises, which are made to us in Jesus Christ, so as to trust and rely confidently upon them for the pardon of our sins, and the salvation of our souls in particular. And this is that which the scriptures call *believing in Jesus Christ* ; and that which the apostle here bids the jailor do, that he may be saved.

BUT because this is a matter of extraordinary importance, and your eternal salvation depends upon the due performance of it, I shall further confirm and explain it to you, from several instances in holy scripture. And for this I know not whom we can better consult than St. Paul himself, who spake these words in my text, and cannot but be acknowledged to have been as true a believer as ever lived. And therefore we will consider what kind of faith his was ; for if ours be like his, we cannot but be saved, as he doubtless is.

Now,

Now, *first*, we find St. Paul believing, yea, confidently asserting, that Christ not only died for sinners in general, but for him in particular; *I live*, saith he, *by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*, Gal. ii. 20. He did not only believe that Christ was a saviour, but he was confident that he was his saviour; and so applied the general promises of the gospel unto his own particular person. And so questionless every one, that would truly believe, must of necessity do. For to believe only in general, that Christ died for mankind, is no more than what a formal professor, a glossing hypocrite, nay, it is no more than what the devils themselves may do: they believe as much as this, but are never the better for it. And therefore to speak only of a general assent to the word of God, as the papists and others do, is to say nothing at all of the real essence of true and saving faith, which consists only in a fiducial reliance or dependence upon Christ for the pardon of our sins in a particular manner; that whereas the promises of pardon by Christ are made only in general, not to you or me in particular, but to all that repent, whosoever they be; he that would believe must apply those general promises to himself, as particularly specified, and so concerned in them. As when God had promised *Joshua*, and in him all true penitents, saying, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*. This St. Paul applies to himself, *Heb. xiii. 5, 6*. So here Christ hath said, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest*, Matth. xi. 28. So then we may boldly say, Christ calls us, and will give rest to us in particular, if we be weary and heavy laden. Yea, saith a believing soul, doth Christ call such as are weary of their sins? I am such a one, and therefore I am sure he calls me, and will give rest to me as well as to any other person in the world. Thus St. Paul, *That is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom, saith he, I am chief*, 1 Tim. i. 15. and so he appropriates the general proposition to his own particular person: as if he had said, Christ came to save all penitent sinners, and as I am such a one, therefore he came to save me: this is believing in Christ indeed.

WHICH that you may still clearer understand, I desire you in the next place to observe how St. Paul acts his faith, *Rom. viii. 33, 34, 35, 37, 38*. where you may see how he matters not any charge that could be brought against him; nor fears any condemnation that could be brought upon him: it is true, the law had accused him, and justice had condemned him; but what then? *Christ*, saith he, *is dead, Christ is risen, yea, he is now at the right hand of God, making intercession for us*. This is what his faith was so firmly fixed upon, that it made him rejoice and triumph over all, both fear and danger: and as for tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, sword, and the like, he laughed at these things, as no way able to separate him from the love of Christ: *nay, in these things*, saith he, *we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*. And if ye would know the reason of this his confidence, you may see it in the next words: *for*, saith he, *I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, &c. can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*: where you may see faith riding in its triumphant chair, defying grim death itself, and trampling upon every thing that did but seem to stand in its way to glory. And as St. Paul there acteth his faith himself, so certainly he advised the jailor in my text to do; even not only to assent to the word of God in general, nor only to believe in general that Christ was the saviour of mankind, but to believe in him so as to trust, depend, and confidently rely upon him for the salvation of his immortal soul, nothing doubting but that he is both able and willing to do it; yea, fully persuaded that he will do it too. And this therefore is that faith in Christ which we must all have, if we ever desire to be saved by him. But then you'll say, doth not such a faith as this encourage security, and embolden men in sinful presumption, making as if they cannot miss of salvation, if they be but confident they shall be saved? to this I answer:

1. It is impossible to preach the gospel so, but that a carnal and sinful heart may wrest it so as to suck poison instead of honey from it; such being apt to take all occasions of turning the grace of God into wantonness. And therefore the apostle himself, when he treated upon this subject, even our justification by faith in Christ, he was still forced to prevent this objection by a peremptory denial of the consequence, *Rom. iii. 31. chap. vi. 1*. But it is one thing to speak of the true nature of this doctrine, another thing to speak of the abuse which corrupt men

men make of it. There are some, as the apostle tells us, *who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction*; but it doth not follow, that they ought not therefore to read them, nor hear them read: so here, although some may abuse this doctrine of faith to the cherishing themselves in impiety and licentiousness; yet it doth not follow, but that it both may and ought to be explained and preached to you; because though some may abuse it, yet none can be saved without it. And we must not conceal any thing from you that is necessary for your salvation, for fear that others may make a bad use of it; for if they will destroy themselves, it does not follow that we must suffer you to be destroyed too, without telling you the very truth how you may be saved.

BUT, *secondly* and principally, my answer to this objection is, that whatsoever men of corrupt minds may think, no man whatsoever can thus believe in Christ, but he must of necessity repent, and obey God to the utmost of his power. For,

1. ALTHOUGH it be only by this particular faith in Christ, which I have now described, that we can be either justified or saved, yet none can thus believe in Christ but he that is first fully persuaded in himself of the truth and certainty of the whole word of God, which it is impossible for any man in the world to be, and yet to live in the constant commission of any known sin, or the wilful neglect of any known duty. For such a persuasion as this is cannot but have that influence upon him, and make such impressions in his mind, as to incline his will to the observance of whatsoever is required of him.

2. No man can thus firmly and confidently believe that he shall be saved by Christ, that doth not observe such things as Christ himself saith he must do, or not be saved. For when Christ hath revealed his will and pleasure, that he will save only such and such persons, how is it possible for any man to be persuaded that he shall be saved by him, that is not such a person as Christ requires him to be in order thereunto: but Christ requires repentance, *Luk. xiii. 3.* and universal righteousness, without which he saith we shall not be saved, *Matth. v. 20.* And therefore they that do not repent, and are not sincerely righteous, how can they expect, much less believe they shall be saved by him? especially considering that he calls none else, nor promiseth rest to any but such as are weary and heavy laden with their sins, *Matth. xi. 28.*

HENCE, *lastly*, such a faith as I have now described doth of itself produce a pious and good life; for it purifies the heart, *Acts xv. 9.* *1 John iii. 3.* And the reason is, because he that believeth in Christ as his priest to make atonement for him, cannot but believe in him as his king too to rule and govern him, otherwise he believes not wholly in Christ, but only in part of him: for he was made our sanctification as well as righteousness. And no man can believe in him at all, that doth not believe in him for all that he hath procured for us. And therefore, so long as you continue in your sins, it is in vain for you to speak of believing in Christ, for you do not, whatsoever you may say or think; ye are still but infidels.

Now, from what you have heard upon this subject, none of you but may easily learn that which is the greatest concern, which you either have or can have in the whole world, even how to be saved: howsoever, that you may be sure to apprehend it aright, I shall in few terms shew you the way and method you are to take, that every soul amongst you may live and be happy for ever; which, if you desire to be, observe these few rules, and the work is done.

1. REPENT of your former sins; I do not doubt but you all cannot but know every one the sins of his own heart and life: and whatsoever sins you know yourselves to be guilty of, you must of necessity forsake them, otherwise it is impossible for you to be saved: you must first repent, before it is possible for you to believe the gospel.

2. BEING truly humbled for, and resolved against your former sins, you must likewise, for the future, walk in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life, ordering all your thoughts, words, and actions, according to the commands of God, to the best of your skill and power, sincerely endeavouring to commit no sin wilfully, nor yet to omit any duty either to God or man, but always striving to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and to shine as lights in it.

Lastly, WHEN you have done all, trust not to your repentance or obedience, for they will both fail you; but trust and confide in the Lord Jesus Christ, humbly and firmly believing, that God for his sake will pardon the sins which you have

repented of, and accept of these duties which you sincerely, though imperfectly, perform unto him ; and by consequence that he will make you both holy here, and happy hereafter. This was the end of Christ's coming into the world, and this is the sum and substance of all the promises which are sealed unto you with his blood, and therefore you need not doubt of it, but rather have all the reason in the world stedfastly to believe it, yea, and be confident of it. And therefore you not only may, but must be fully persuaded in yourselves, that by the virtue of Christ's merit your persons shall be justified, and your duties accepted ; that by the assistance of his grace and spirit your lusts shall be all subdued, and your natures sanctified, and by consequence that in and through him your souls shall be glorified with God for ever. And let me tell you, you have God's own word for it, and therefore you may be confident and assured of it. For if you be not failing to yourselves, I am sure he will never fail you. Away therefore with all diffident and doubting thoughts, as much as possibly you can, and stir up yourselves to lay fast hold on Christ, firmly and stedfastly believing, that God for his sake hath not only pardoned your former sins, but will bring you e're long to everlasting glory. This is the way, the only way whereby every person here present may get to heaven. Do but thus *believe in Christ, and you shall be saved.*

S E R M O N CXXXIV.

The Chain of Evangelical Graces.

2 P E T. i. 5, 6, 7.

And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge :

And to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness :

And to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

SIMON PETER, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, writing this epistle to those who *had obtained like precious faith* with him and the rest of the apostles, in *the righteousness of our God and saviour*, as he expressly calls Jesus Christ ; begins it much after the same manner as St. Paul begins his epistles, with this solemn benediction and prayer, *grace and peace be multiplied unto you, thro' the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord*, ver. 2. And that they might better apprehend the meaning and reason of this apostolical salutation, he adds immediately, *according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, thro' the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*, ver. 3. whereby he puts them in mind, that almighty God hath given us the grace and peace which he had wished them, and all things necessary to make us holy and happy, through the knowledge of the said Jesus our Lord, *who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, by the glory and power that shineth forth in the gospel.*

AND

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AND lest they should wonder how this could be, he further adds, *whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises ; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world thro' lust*, ver. 4. as if he had said, God hath given us the great things before mentioned in Christ, because he hath given us the promise of them ; so that it is our own fault if we have them not. For in Christ he hath promised us such illuminations and assistances of his holy spirit, that if we do but believe and trust, as we ought, in them, we may thereby be instructed and enabled to mortify all worldly and carnal affections, and to purify our corrupt nature to that degree, that we may be made partakers of the divine nature, not of the essence or substance of it, but so as that we shall be made over again as we were at first, in the image and likeness of God, holy, as he who hath called us is holy : which therefore is elsewhere expressed by our being *partakers of his holiness*, Heb. xii. 10. and they who are such are certainly possessed, according to his promise, of *grace and peace*, and all things pertaining to *life and godliness*.

THE way being thus opened, the apostle brings in the words of my text, saying, *and besides this*, or rather (as the original words, *καὶ αὐτὸ τῷτο*, may be rendered) *and accordingly*, or *therefore giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue*. For this is plainly an inference drawn from the premises, like that of St. Paul, who having discoursed of the promises which God hath made us in the new covenant, draws this conclusion from them, *having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. So here St. Peter having acquainted those who believed in Christ, that God in him hath given them such promises, that if they were not failing to themselves in the use and application of them, they might be partakers of the divine nature ; he therefore adviseth them *to give all diligence, to add to their faith virtue*, and so on till they were accordingly sanctified, or made holy in all manner of conversation. This being the greatest encouragement that could be given them to do it, and that which would make them inexcusable, unless they did it. For although they were not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves, much less to attain and exercise such great virtues as are here specified, so that it would be in vain to attempt it by their own power, yet seeing almighty God himself hath promised to assist them in it, that his grace shall be sufficient for them, and his strength made perfect in their weakness, so that they may do all things through Christ who strengtheneth them ; this should put them upon using their utmost care and diligence to add one grace unto another, 'till they have compleated the whole chain, so as to be restored to that divine temper of mind, that they may, according to their capacity, be like to God himself. It is now their own fault if they do it not, and it will be their joy and glory if they do it.

Now, as St. Peter wrote this to those who believed in Christ, I am to repeat the same, and to explain it to such as profess to do so, and I hope really do it : for, I suppose, all here present are baptized into Christ, and so made members of his body. If there be any who are not, I have nothing at present to say to them, but only to wish them to have a care of themselves, and to come into the church, and so to Christ while they may, lest, being not found in Christ, they be lost and undone for ever. But I hope there are none here present so careless of their own welfare, but that you are all in the number of Christ's disciples, being made so by being baptized according to his institution and command, and accordingly believe in him as your only saviour, to save you from your sins, and to bring you at last to heaven. It is to you that these words belong ; you are all in the number of those who are here required *to add to your faith, virtue*.

IF you had not faith, you could not add virtue to it. But from your presence here at this time I cannot but in charity conclude, that you have it already, and therefore I need not advise you to get it. Howsoever it may not be amiss to put you in mind how to act and exercise it so, as that you may attain the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. You say you believe in Christ ; and I suppose you do so : but what do ye believe in Christ for ? for the pardon of your sins ? ye do well : ye may, and ought to believe in him for that : for he being the propitiation for your sins, in him they may be all pardoned, though none can
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be pardoned without him. But your sins can never be pardoned, unless you first repent of them. And therefore you must first believe in Christ to give you repentance, and then forgiveness of sins, *Acts* v. 31. As God hath promised in Jesus Christ to give you a new heart, and to renew a right spirit within you, that you may walk in his ways, and keep his statutes, you must first believe in him for the performance of such promises in the use of the means which he hath ordained for that purpose; such as fasting, and praying, and watching, and reading, and hearing his holy word. These things, which are in your own power, you must constantly exercise yourselves in; you must never neglect your private devotions, nor any opportunities that you can get of performing them in publick. And you must perform them all in the name of Christ, believing and trusting on him to co-operate with them, that they may be effectual to the turning you from the darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God; and so to your hearty and sincere repentance for all your sins. And when you have done that, then you may and must believe in Christ for the pardon of them, not doubting but that God for his sake will acquit and discharge you from all the punishments that you were obliged to undergo for them.

AND so, if you would act your faith aright, whatsoever God hath said in his holy word, you must not doubt in the least of it, but be fully persuaded in your minds, that it is as infallibly true and certain, as you are or can be of any thing you see, or hear, or understand, and more too; forasmuch as you have the word of God himself for that, which is infinitely more than you have for any thing that you perceive only by your senses or reason. It is indeed the firmest ground that you can ever have to believe any thing at all. Thus it is that you ought to act your faith in every thing which God hath revealed to you. So far as you know it to be revealed by him, you must take his word for it, without troubling yourselves with enquiring any further into it. It is sufficient that he, who cannot lie, hath said it; and he said it, that you might believe it upon his word; which therefore you are bound to do, in the highest manner that it is possible for you to believe any thing in the world.

THUS you must believe, that God in the beginning created the heaven and the earth, as certainly as if you had seen him do it: that he is wheresoever you are, as certainly as that you yourselves are there: that Jesus Christ his only son is of the same substance, or one with the father, as certainly as that he is his son: that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin *Mary*, as certainly as that he was ever conceived and born at all: that he died for your sins, as certainly as that ever you committed them. Thus you must believe, that you must one day stand before his tribunal, as certainly as if you was now before it; that you must then give him an account of your whole lives, as certainly as that you are now alive: and that he is now in heaven, making intercession for you, as certainly as you believe that you yourselves are upon the earth.

AND thus you ought to believe whatsoever you find to be reveal'd in the scriptures, as certainly as you find it to be there reveal'd, without making any doubt or question of it; particularly the great promises which God hath there made in Jesus Christ, to cleanse and purify your hearts by his holy spirit; you must believe that he will perform them, and then he will most certainly perform them to you. So that by this means ye may be enabled by him to attain, and exercise all such graces, as are necessary to fit you for his service upon earth, and to live with him in heaven.

SUCH a faith as this is can never be alone, but will always have a train of other graces and virtues attending upon it; which you are therefore commanded to add to your faith, as a mark and sign that it is such a faith as the gospel requires: and that which you must add in the first place, and most immediately to it, is *virtue*. For almighty God, in whom ye believe, doth here expressly require you by his apostle, to add to your faith, *virtue*. *Virtue*, I know, is a word that is commonly used for morality or probity in general, even for all such good dispositions and qualities as are required to make a virtuous and good man. But many of them being hereafter particularly named as well as virtue, the word in this place is plainly taken in a more restrained sense, wherein it is sometimes used for courage, resolution, and zeal for the service and honour of God, which naturally follows upon a firm and stedfast faith. For he that believes in almighty God, the governour of the world,

world, and in Jesus Christ the saviour of mankind, must needs cleave to him with full purpose of heart, and resolve stedfastly with himself to serve and glorify him, whatsoever comes of it, that so he may continue in his love and favour. What noble exploits did the saints of old perform? what hazards did they run? what difficulties did they overcome by faith? *Heb. xi.* With what undaunted courage did *St. Paul* go through all his troubles he met with, and defy the bonds and afflictions which he knew beforehand would befall him in doing his duty? *but none of these things*, saith he, *move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, &c.* *Acts xx. 24.* And elsewhere he saith, *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* — *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, *Phil. iv. 12, 13.* And accordingly he adviseth all that believe, *to be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might*, *Ephes. vi. 10.* This therefore is that true magnanimity and fortitude, that christian virtue which you are here commanded to add unto your faith. As you believe in the almighty disposer of all things, you must not be afraid of any thing that can happen to you in your serving him. As you must not run yourselves into danger, so you must not run from any duty to escape it. Whatsoever rubs or impediments you meet with in the way to heaven, you must not regard them, but still go on, *pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.* This is to be virtuous indeed, to quit yourselves like men, like christians, like those who hope to be with Christ ere long in heaven, when nothing upon earth can hinder your progress thither, but you still keep on an even course, notwithstanding all the discouragements that men or devils can lay before you. Unless you have, and exercise such virtue as this, you may conclude that you have no faith at all; or that which *St. James* calls a *dead faith*, that will stand you in no stead, *James ii. 26.* And therefore, as ever you desire to shew yourselves to be Christ's faithful disciples, you must take special care to add to your faith this virtue, or christian zeal and courage, so as to be stedfastly purposed to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless; to keep your consciences void of all offence both towards God, and towards men, whatsoever it cost you; and to be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be vain in the Lord*, *1 Cor. xv. 58.*

BUT as you add to your *faith, virtue*; so you must *add to virtue, knowledge*; that you may know how to use your virtue aright, and not misapply and abuse it to ill purposes, as ignorant, though well-meaning people are apt to do. *St. Paul* testified of the *Jews*, that they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, *Rom. x. 2.* Their zeal of God was in itself good and commendable, but it not being according to knowledge, what mischief did they do with it? they killed the Lord of glory, and afterwards his disciples, thinking that they did God service in it, *John xvi. 2.* and all for want of knowing his will and their duty to him.

THERE are many such among us at this day, who being led not by the light of God's word, but that which they pretend to be within them, are fallen from the faith of Christ into such damnable errors and heresies, which overturn the foundations of the christian religion, and yet are so conceited of themselves, so resolute and obstinate in the antichristian way which they are got into, that they will do or suffer any thing rather than go one step out of it; and think they do God service, if they can but seduce others into the same pit of destruction with themselves. Neither are these the only people that are justly given up to strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, and stand in it to the last. There are many other, both among ourselves, and in other places, who having once, by Satan's procurement, espoused an erroneous opinion or conceit, how extravagant soever it be, will never part with it upon any account whatsoever; no, not to save their lives, or their immortal souls. And all for want of knowing the truth, and the things that belong to their everlasting peace.

It is true, this cannot properly be called *virtue*, but rather *pride* and *obstinacy*, one of the Devil's devices to hold those fast, which he hath once got into his clutches. Howsoever, this shews how necessary it is to *add knowledge to your virtue*; that, as you are zealously affected, so you may always be so in a good cause, in such only as will bear the test at the last day.

FOR which purpose you must search the scriptures, or hear them read and expounded by such as are sent of God to do it; not by such as come of their own heads, and are employed by the deceiver of mankind to corrupt the faith, and to infuse into you such notions and principles as are contrary to the doctrine of the gospel. Remember the caution which the Lord Jesus hath given you with his own mouth, saying, *beware of false prophets which come unto you in sheep's cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*, Matth. vii. 15. Neither must you think it enough to read or hear the holy scriptures read, but you must mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that *you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ*, every day more and more. To which end I know nothing will conduce more than your constant attendance at the prayers of the church, where you have God's word solemnly read and delivered to you in his name, and by his authority. And the prayers also and the collects are so wisely contrived, that by them you may be instructed in all things necessary for you to believe and do, as well as obtain the grace and assistance of God's holy spirit to believe and do accordingly; and so may *add to virtue, knowledge*; such knowledge as will make you wise unto salvation, and direct your virtue, and keep it within the bounds which God hath set it.

BUT then you must *add to your knowledge, temperance*; without which you can never make a right use of your knowledge, nor do that which it directs you to. For though knowledge be the act only of the soul, yet while the soul is united to the body, and useth the organs of the body, especially the animal spirits in its operations, unless the body be kept in good temper, the soul cannot keep its thoughts in order, nor make any good use of the knowledge it hath attained; for it will still be over-powered by the humour that is predominant in the body. And therefore our great Lord and master commands you to *take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares*, Luk. xxi. 34. whereby he forewarns you, that intemperance and excess in meat and drink, or any thing else, makes all men, even the most knowing, at all times incapable of minding the concerns of the other world, or doing any thing as they ought, in order to it. His apostle also puts you in mind of the same thing; where, speaking of our christian race, he saith, *every one that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things: now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible*, 1 Cor. ix. 25. as if he had said, they who strive to get a crown only of fading leaves or flowers, are temperate in all things; how much more should they be so, who strive for the crown of eternal glory? as all, I suppose, here present do. But you can never obtain it without sobriety and temperance in all things. And therefore *the grace of God that bringeth salvation teacheth you, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, you first live soberly, then righteously and godly in this present world*, Tit. ii. 12. Because, unless you live soberly, you can never be either righteous or godly, and by consequence never get to heaven.

WHEREFORE, as ever you desire to come there, you must take special care to avoid all manner of luxury and excess, especially in meats and drinks. You must not *make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*, Rom. xiii. 14. and for that purpose you must avoid all occasions of intemperance and debauchery, and shun those who are addicted to it, as much as if they were infected with the plague; you must strictly observe the wise man's counsel, *be not among wine-bibbers, among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty*, Prov. xxiii. 20, 21. Many of them do so, as ye know, in this world; but in the next they will all be so poor and miserable, that they will not have so much as one drop of water to cool their tongues. And therefore be advised to have a care of yourselves: if any of you have hitherto indulged yourselves in these brutish vices, leave them off immediately, lest ye be damned for ever. And still carry this in your minds, as a most certain rule, that whatsoever knowledge you have, it will signify nothing to you, unless you *add temperance* to it.

NOR unless to temperance you add patience; which is as necessary to keep the mind in order, as temperance is to keep the body so: for as intemperance discomposeth the one, so doth impatience the other. It puts the soul into a fret and ferment, and all its faculties into so much disorder and confusion, that it can do nothing

nothing regularly, being for the present besides itself. And therefore our blessed saviour, who knows our frame better than we ourselves do, when he had told his disciples what troubles they should meet with in the world, said, *in your patience possess ye your souls*, Luke xxi. 19. implying, that if they were impatient under any thing that happened, they could not keep their souls in a right temper and disposition for the service he expected from them. Neither did this concern those only to whom it was spoken, but all that believe in him, and you among the rest. Whatsoever falls out, tho' it be never so cross to your expectation or desire, take all the care you can that your minds be not disturbed at it, but by patience and meekness keep them as quiet and sedate as possibly ye can. I know this may be something difficult to some tempers; such, I mean, as are naturally apt to take fire upon the least occasion. But though nature be strong, grace is stronger: by it a man may alter and amend his natural constitution, if he will but set himself in good earnest about it. For the grace of Christ is sufficient for all that believe in him, if they will but apply and use it as they ought, to restrain the most unruly passions, and keep them within their bounds; as it behoves you all to do, if ever you desire to eschew evil, and do good in the world: *for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, Jam. i. 20. When a man is in a fret, impatient or angry, as many are at every thing that happens otherwise than they would have it, he may do much mischief, but can do nothing well or pleasing unto God. And therefore you had all need to set a strict watch over yourselves, that you may never be surprized into any passion: but whatsoever falls out, that may be apt to ruffle and discompose you, do but pause a while, and give yourselves time to recollect your thoughts, and consider whence it comes, whither it tends, and how much good may be designed you in it, and you may soon see what infinite cause you have to submit patiently to it, and so learn by degrees this divine art of *adding to your temperance, patience*.

AND to patience, godliness; without which it is not true christian-patience: for that proceeds only from a due sense of God, and of that infinite wisdom and goodness, which he manifesteth in the government of the world, and all things in it. But where that is, there must needs be godliness, or the fear of God, expressing itself in doing all one can to serve, worship, and please him; which therefore must be your chief care and study as long as you live in the world, this being the chief end of your living in it. Ye must not spend your time as most people do, in eating, or drinking, or sleeping, or playing, or working only for the things of this life; but *whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, ye must do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. ye must strive all ye can to promote his honour, and shew forth his praise in the place where he hath set you, and according to the ability that he hath given you for it. And for that purpose you must never omit your private devotions morning and evening, nor neglect his publick worship when you can have an opportunity to perform it. You must delight in the law of the Lord, and exercise yourselves in it both day and night, *Psal. i. 2*. You must take all occasions that you can get of celebrating the memory of the death he suffered for you in your own nature, by receiving the sacrament of his last supper, with an hearty repentance for all your sins, and stedfast faith in him for the pardon of them. Whensoever you approach or make your addresses to him, you must carry yourselves before him with that reverence and godly fear, whereby you may testify and discover your acknowledgment of his supreme authority; and so may be truly said to adore and worship him. You must use these and all the means of grace, heartily and sincerely trusting in God your saviour to make them effectual to you, that ye may obtain grace by them to do whatsoever he requires of you. And accordingly you must love the Lord your God with all your hearts; you must fear nothing so much as his displeasure; you must desire his love and favour above all things in the world; ye must firmly believe all the great truths that he hath revealed to you; ye must live with a constant dependance upon the promises that he hath made you; ye must rejoice in his holy name above all things else; ye must praise and thank him for his blessings ye have received from him. In short, ye must walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord to the utmost of your power, blameless; and yet not expect to merit any thing by it, but trust only in the merits of your saviour to make what you do acceptable in his sight. This is to be godly indeed.

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AND to this *godliness* you must add *brotherly kindness*; which you cannot chuse but do, if it be such *godliness* as I have now described: for *brotherly kindness* is nothing else but that love and kindness which one brother hath for another. But if ye be godly, ye are regenerate or born of God, and made his children; and therefore must needs love those who have the same father, and are of the same father, and are of the same family with yourselves, and so are really your brethren begotten of the same father. And the apostle observes, *he that loveth him that be- gat, loveth him also that is begotten of him*, 1 John v. 1. And unless ye do that, unless ye love the children of God, ye may be confident that ye are not in the number of them, nor have any love for God himself, but are still in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. And therefore if ye would manifest yourselves to be godly, ye must love those who are so; ye must do good to all, but *especially to them that are of the household of faith*, Gal. vi. 10. ye must have a particular kindness for them above all men, for that reason, because they are your brethren in Christ Jesus; and so add to your *godliness*, *brotherly kindness*.

BUT then to your *brotherly kindness* ye must add *charity*. Though your love should be expressed in a more especial manner to your brethren, yet it is not to be confined to them, but must extend itself to all your neighbours, to all mankind; they being all made in the image of God, as ye love him for his own sake, so ye must love them for his sake; ye must not bear any grudge or hatred, malice or envy, against any man living; nor ever think of revenging any wrong you have received: but you must *love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them which hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you*, Matth. v. 44. This is that which Christ requires of all his disciples, and makes the distinguishing character betwixt them and all other people, John xiii. 35. that most excellent gift of *charity*, which is the bond of perfectness, Col. iii. 14. that perfectly ties all men together, and all other graces and virtues in every man that hath it; so that he fulfils the whole law, Rom. xiii. 10. And therefore ye are here commanded to add this to all the other, to crown and perfect them, that they may be really such as the gospel requires: that ye may want nothing, but be furnished in every good work; which ye can never be, unless ye add to *godliness*, *brotherly kindness*; and to *brotherly kindness*, *charity*.

THUS we have briefly run through the whole chain of *evangelical graces*, which ye are here enjoined to put together with the utmost of your care and diligence. Giving all diligence, saith the apostle, add to your *faith*, *virtue*; to *virtue*, *knowledge*, &c. And verily this requires all the diligence that ye can possibly use, forasmuch as it is a matter of the greatest consequence that ye have to do in the world. It is the one thing necessary. How diligent soever ye may be in your calling, and how much soever ye may get by it, you will not be one jot the better for it at long-run, unless you get to heaven; and that you can never do, unless ye be first possessed of these heavenly virtues, to qualify and fit you for it. And if ye think it an easy matter to get there, ye have just cause to suspect that ye never set about it in good earnest: for if ye have, ye cannot but have found it the hardest task that ye ever undertook; and that all the diligence ye can use is little enough, if not too little for it; ye may perhaps think it easy enough to attain and exercise some of these graces, but unless ye have them all, ye had as good have none; for the want of any one of them will spoil all the rest, and make them insignificant and useless. Whereas if they all go together, they will assist and influence one another, so as to carry you thro' the whole compass of your duty, and make you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

THIS is the first reason which the apostle here gives why they should give all diligence to do what he here adviseth, saying, *for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 8. If these things, all these things before-mentioned, *faith*, and *virtue*, and *knowledge*, and *temperance*, and *patience*, and *godliness*, and *brotherly kindness*, and *charity*, if they be all in you, and abound, so as to exert and put forth themselves according to their several ways of working, they will purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God; rectifying the temper both of your souls and bodies, so that ye shall be no longer barren, or, as the word signifies, unactive or idle, but shall bring forth the fruits of righteousness, and do all such good works which

which God requires of those whom he calls to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas without these things ye are but as so many dry trees that bear no fruit, but only cumber the ground, and therefore must e're long be cut down, and cast into the fire; that everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.

HAVE a care that this be not your case; as it will most certainly be, unless ye practise those plain and necessary things that ye have now heard of. For as the apostle here argues in the next place, *he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*, ver. 9. He is blind, or at least purblind, so that he can see nothing but what lies just before him, the things of this present world. As for the other world, and the things which belong to that, they are far off, quite out of his sight, so that he hath no sense or feeling of them; they being seen or perceived only by such whose hearts are cleansed and purined by faith, and virtue, and knowledge, and all the rest of those christian graces that are here spoken of. And although he was once purged from his sins by the blood of Christ in the sacrament of baptism, he hath now forgotten that. He hath forgotten that he was ever made a christian, and therefore lives as if he was not. So do the greatest part of those who are called christians, even all who do not add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, all the gifts and graces of the holy spirit, which Christ hath promised to those who truly believe in him.

BUT who is there among us that doth this, or so much as strives to do it? I fear there are but few, but hope there may be some; and heartily wish that all here present would be in the number of them. For this is not a thing that may be done or left undone at pleasure, without any harm or prejudice to yourselves; but it is a thing that must be done, or else you must be undone both now and for ever; both your present and eternal welfare depend upon it.

AND, blessed be God, you may all do it, if ye will: if ye will but set yourselves seriously and diligently as ye are here commanded about it, and constantly use the means which God hath ordained for it, trusting in him to assist and bless you in it: for his grace is sufficient for all, and for you as well as for any others. Many others have found it so by experience, and so may you as well as they, if you will but follow their steps, and make that use of it which they did.

AND how happy would ye then be? ye may perhaps think yourselves happy enough already. If ye have but a large estate, a great deal of money, a good stock, or a brisk trade, and can add house to house, and field to field, ye may please yourselves with your present condition, without troubling your heads about adding to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, such other things as respect your future state. Tho' I cannot pretend to know your thoughts, it is easy to guess that this is at the bottom of them. But I beseech you to consider, that ye must not always live as ye now do; for you must not always live upon the earth: the time will come when you must die, as certainly as ye are now alive; and then, whose must those things be that you now get? none of yours to be sure: they will do you no good, nor perhaps any body else; but may ruine those you leave them to, as well as yourselves that got them. Whereas by giving all diligence to add one grace to another, and one degree of grace unto another, so as to become every day more and more virtuous, and wise, and temperate, and patient, and godly, and loving to the brethren, and charitable to all men; by this means you'll grow rich in faith, and good works; you'll live always under the favour and protection of the almighty; you'll have his blessing upon all ye have while you live, and when ye die, you'll be advanced to the crown of glory, and live in perfect peace and happiness for ever; and all through him in whom ye believe, the eternal son of God. *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N CXXXV.

The Duty of Temperance and Sobriety.

LUKE xxi. 34.

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

INTENDING, by God's assistance, to shew you how great a virtue it is to live temperately and soberly in the world, and how odious and loathsome a thing it is to be drunken : out of the many places of holy scripture which might serve for that purpose, I have chosen these words from whence to do it, as being the words of Christ himself, uttered not by a prophet or apostle, but with his own mouth. For seeing you, to whom I speak, all profess yourselves to be his servants and disciples, ye cannot surely but hearken very diligently to what your Lord and master hath said to you ; as knowing, that nothing ever came out of his sacred mouth but what was perfectly true, and just, and good in itself, and likewise necessary to be known and observed by you, and by all who profess to believe in him, and hope to be saved by him ; especially considering, that you must all e're long stand before his judgment-seat, where he will pass a final and irrevocable sentence, either of absolution or else of condemnation upon every one of you, according as ye have or have not believed what he hath taught, and done what he hath bidden you. And seeing *he came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved*, while he was here he took care to instruct mankind in their whole duty, and to put them in mind of the strict account they must give before him at the last day, how they have performed it. And that you may always have your accounts ready, he hath told you beforehand, that you must not expect any great warning of his coming to judge the world, for that the time is kept secret in the father's breast ; *of that day and hour, saith he, knoweth no man ; no, not the angels of heaven, but my father only*, Matth. xxiv. 36. and therefore he adviseth you to be always ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the son of man cometh, *ver. 44.* and for that purpose he would have you always to be upon your watch, constantly expecting the sound of the trumpet to summon you to appear before his tribunal. And being very loath to surprize you, or take you at any disadvantage, he requires you above all things to keep yourselves in such a temper both of mind and body, as you will wish to be found in at that day ; and therefore saith, *take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*

In which words you may easily take notice of two things ; your saviour's will and command, that your hearts be never overcharged with *surfeiting or drunkenness, or the cares of this life* ; and the reason of it ; *lest that day come upon you unawares.*

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The command is expressed by way of caution, the better to imprint and enforce it upon our minds. He doth not say only, *let not your hearts be over-charged*; but, *take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting, or drunkenness*; whereby he hath signified his pleasure to you, that he would have you take special care of this above all things; that whatsoever ye do, ye be sure never to eat or drink too much, never so much as to be overcharged with it.

BUT for our better understanding of this command, we must call to mind that general rule necessary to be observed in the interpretation of all God's laws, that we may rightly apprehend the whole sense and scope of them, and that is this; that whatsoever sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is likewise commanded; and whatsoever duty is commanded, the contrary sin is likewise forbidden. As in the second commandment, where you are forbidden to worship or bow down to images, you are thereby commanded to worship and bow down to God. In the third ye are forbidden to take the name of God in vain, and therefore commanded to sanctify it. In the fifth you are commanded to honour your parents, and therefore forbidden to despise or slight them. In the eighth you are forbidden to steal any thing from your neighbours, and therefore commanded to pay what ye owe unto them: and so of the rest. According to which rule, our saviour here forbidding you to be overcharged with *surfeiting, or drunkenness, or the cares of this life*, thereby commands you to be always temperate. And therefore to understand his will aright, we must first consider the nature of temperance, as it is one of the four cardinal virtues, upon which the exercise of all other virtues doth in a great measure depend. For as no man can exercise any virtue aright, that is not so prudent as to know what he ought to do; so just as to be willing to do it according to his knowledge; and so valiant and courageous as to press through all difficulties for the doing of it; so neither can any one be virtuous in any thing that is not temperate in all things; as you will acknowledge, when ye once know what it is to be so: which that you may, I shall deduce the nature of true temperance from its first principles and grounds, and set it in such a light before you, that ye may all clearly see into it.

FOR which purpose therefore we must first consider, that although our souls be of an heavenly and spiritual nature, yet our bodies were all made of earth, and are indeed nothing else but plain lumps of earth diversly tempered and modified. For it is written, *the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground*, Gen. ii. 7. He took so much dust or earth as would suffice to make a body of such a size as he designed man's should be. This he ordered and tempered so by his almighty word, that some of it should be such as we call flesh, some bones, some brains, some lungs, some heart, some veins, some arteries, some blood, some nerves, and so for all the parts of the body: these he puts together, each in the proper place he had designed it for, and so it became an human body, composed all of earth, but so as to be a fit vehicle for a rational and immaterial soul to reside in, which he therefore immediately joined to it: for he had no sooner formed this body of man of the dust of the earth, but *he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living soul*, as it follows in the text now mentioned.

AND as the first human body was thus made up altogether of earth, so all others, being propagated from that, must needs consist of the same materials, even nothing else but earth. And as our bodies are composed, so they are upheld and nourished only of the earth. For our maker hath so ordered it, that our bodies are increased till they come to their full growth, and afterwards preserved by putting several sorts of earth into our mouths, which being carried down into our stomachs, are there digested, so that the chyle or juice that is proper for nourishment, being separated from the grosser parts, it is wonderfully conveyed by little pipes or chanel's round about the body, into every, even the least part of it; and where it meets with any thing ready to decay, there some of it stays to prop it up, and so keeps the whole both in motion and life.

BUT all this, I say, is done only by several sorts of earth: for every thing we thus eat or put into our mouths still comes out of the earth, either immediately, as herbs, and roots, and plants, or else mediately, as fruits and flesh. For altho' the fruit doth not come directly out of the earth, but from the tree, yet the tree doth so, that produceth it. And although the flesh we eat doth not come immediately

diately from it, yet the fowl or cattle, whose flesh it is, are fed of that which groweth upon the earth. And the very fish too, although they live in the water, they are nourished by some earthy matter they find there, or by the earthy part of the water itself. And so, whatsoever it is we eat, howsoever it is digested, ordered, and made fit for our use, it comes originally out of the earth, otherwise it could not nourish us: for nothing can be nourished but by something of its own nature. And therefore our bodies being all earth, all our nourishment must needs be so too: whatsoever shape or figure it is in, whatsoever virtue or quality it is of, whether it be hot or cold, hard or soft, dry or liquid, it is all but earth still. The very liquors we drink come out of the earth, or else are part of it, as all water is. That which is rained down from heaven is first exhaled and taken up from the earth, and hath no other nourishment in it of itself, but from the earthy particles that are in it. And thus, as we were made of earth, and must return to it, so all the while that we live upon it, we live also of it.

THIS we all find by daily experience, although there be but few that ever mind it; we every day eat and drink, and so commit earth to earth, and take no further notice of it, nor regard what becomes of it, or whither it goes; and yet by this means God supports us in our being, and prolongs our life, so long as he sees good. Not but that he could do it, if he pleased, without such means now, as well as he will when we come to heaven. But whilst we are upon earth, these are the means which he hath appointed for it, which therefore we are bound to use, and trust on him for his blessing upon them, without which they can never do it; for *man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live*, Deut. viii. 3. Matth. iv. 4. It is God's word and blessing upon what we eat, that makes it effectual to the preservation of our lives. And therefore we ought always to acknowledge him to be our continual preserver, that it is *in him we live, and move, and have our being*, and trust on him, and him alone for it, in the use of these means that he hath ordained for that purpose: which, as I have shewn, is only eating and drinking such things as he for that end hath created, and continually produceth out of the earth, upon which we at present live.

BUT here we must further observe, that these being the means which God hath appointed for the preservation of our bodies in health and life, he hath so ordered it, that the use of them is pleasant to us, not only from that natural instinct which he hath put into us of self-preservation, which makes us pleased with every thing that tends towards it, but likewise because he hath formed our bodies, and particularly those parts which are exercised in the use of these means so, that they are delighted and pleased with the very using of them. The food we eat tickling our senses whilst we eat it, and refreshing our bodies afterward, so as to make us more chearful and pleasant than we were before: which kind of pleasure being so natural to us, that we cannot chuse but find it whether we will or no, it cannot therefore be sinful or unlawful in itself; neither hath God ever forbidden, but rather allowed it, in that he hath made it so natural, and in a manner necessary to us, that we cannot possibly avoid being pleased with eating when we are hungry, and drinking when we are thirsty; and so with the use of these means that he hath given us for our support, when we stand in need of them; I say, when we stand in need of them: for if there be no use or necessity of them, there can be no pleasure in them; as the wise man observes, *the full soul loatheth an honey-comb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*, Prov. xxvii. 7.

THIS therefore is the great fault that men are apt to be guilty of, even to eat or drink more than they have occasion for, more than their nature requires, or perhaps can well bear; for following their appetites too far, they run into excess, taking more of these earthy creatures down into their bodies than they need, and by consequence more than can do them any good; and what doth them no good must needs do them hurt, and be prejudicial to their bodies as well as souls.

HEREIN therefore it is, that the true nature of temperance consisteth, even in moderating our desires of meat and drink, so as to keep them within their bounds, that they be not excessive or inordinate either as to the quality or quantity of either of them, that every one proportion the quality of his food to the estate which God hath given wherewith to provide it; and the quantity of it to the

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temper and constitution that God hath made his body of. All mens bodies are not of the same size, nor of the same complexion, nor disposition; some are hot, and others cold; some dry, and others moist; some strong, others weak; and so some require more, others less meat and drink to supply their defects, and to keep them in a good temper. And therefore every one should take notice of his own constitution, and make such observations upon it as may direct him how to adjust his diet as exactly as he can to it, so as never to eat or drink more than what he finds by experience his body requires to preserve it in health and vigour, fit for the service of God, and for the duties of his particular calling; never so much as to overcharge himself, as our saviour here expresseth it by a metaphor taken from a ship, which, if it be overburthen'd, is in danger of sinking, or at least will lag and sail heavily; but if its freight be proportionate to its bulk, then all is well with it: and so it is with him that never overloads his body with meat or drink, or puts any more into it than what it can easily manage and digest into good nourishment, so as to be as fit for business after, as he was before. And how much, or how little soever such a one eats, he is properly a temperate and sober man. For this is that virtue which is called *temperance*, as in other writings, so in the holy scriptures themselves, where we are commanded to *add to our knowledge, temperance*, 2 Pet. i. 6. as without which all our knowledge will signify but little; for we shall not be able to make a right use of it: whereas with it, the more we know, the better we shall be: for we shall be always ready to improve our knowledge to our own good.

AND here I might begin to recommend this excellent virtue to your practice, but that I fear that when I have begun, I shall scarce know where to make an end; for it is of infinite use through the whole course of our lives, and is not only a single virtue of itself, but is indeed the virtue of all virtues, that without which no virtue can be exercised, nor duty performed, as it ought to be.

IF you look no further than this life, temperance contributes the most of any thing towards the greatest blessing that is in it, even to the health of your bodies: for no more being ever put into them than what there is really need of, and occasion for, every part is able to perform its office, and all concur in carrying the nutriment about to support, strengthen, and invigorate the whole, without leaving any such superfluous humours any where behind, out of which diseases are usually engendered. By which means your bodies will be always kept in good plight, and your senses quick and sprightly, so as to be duly affected with their respective objects. Yea, by this means you will be constantly supplied also with an excellent breed of animal spirits for your souls to make use of in their operations: and so your heads will be always serene, your hearts chearful, your understandings clear, your judgments sound, your memories strong, your consciences watchful, and all your passions regular and orderly. For all the organs and instruments which the soul, so long as it is united to the body, is forced to use, being always kept in a due frame and temper, the soul is able freely to exert itself, and to exercise all its powers and faculties aright. And hence it is that temperance is so great an enemy to vice, and so great a friend to all manner of virtue and goodness. It is the foundation of prudence, the director of justice, the safeguard of chastity, the preserver of modesty, the parent of meekness and humility, the nourisher of peace and concord, love and charity among neighbours. And as for all sorts of business, it is by temperance that they are either well begun, carried on, or finished. By this you are always able to contrive, and project, and manage your secular affairs to the best advantage. By this you are always fit to discourse and converse with men upon any subject. By this you are always disposed to perform the duties which you owe to almighty God. By this ye may read or hear God's holy word with due attention, pray without distraction, and receive the blessed sacrament with that presence and composure of mind, which is necessary to so great a work.

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drink, but keep them always clean, and fit to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, that he may delight to dwell in you, and direct and assist you in the exercise of all true grace and virtue, and in the performance of all such good works as are required of all those that are the heirs of salvation, as I dare say you all desire to be; but can never attain your desires without temperance, that being the first thing necessary in order to it. This reason teaches; this the very light of nature discovers; as we may see in those that contended for the victory in any of the *Olympick* games, of whom the apostle observes, that every one who strove for the victory, *was temperate in all things*. But then he adds, *they did it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible*, 1 Cor. ix. 24. as if he had said, they that strove only for a fading crown of laurel, dieted themselves, and kept their bodies always in a right temper for it; how much more should we do so, who strive for the incorruptible and eternal crown of glory?

BUT these things are so plain and obvious, that I need not insist any longer upon them, especially before such as have already experienced the truth of them, and they are the only competent witnesses in this case. For having been accustomed to it, they know, they feel, they taste the sweet fruits of temperance, and can tell you, that all which I have said of it is nothing in comparison of what there is really in it. Whereas others, who know not what it is, may think I have said too much, and therefore I shall speak no more to them of temperance, but of the contrary vices of gluttony and drunkenness, which they so much admire; but God abhors and hates as the most loathsome and detestable sins that mankind can be guilty of. Insomuch that he judges those who are guilty of them, not to be fit to live; at least if, notwithstanding the advice and correction which their parents have given them for it, they will still continue in them, as appears from that severe law, enacted by God himself for his own people; that if parents have a stubborn and rebellious son, they shall bring him to the elders of the city, and if they can truly say to the elders, *that our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. Then all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die*, Deut. xxi. 20, 21. Whether this law was ever executed we do not find, but we are sure it was the mind of the lawgiver; and that sufficiently declares his abhorrence of these vices, which therefore were generally so abhorred by the *Jews* themselves, that they could not find out a more ignominious name for our blessed saviour, than to call him, *a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber*, Matt. xi. 19. and the wise man advises all to avoid not only these vices themselves, but the company of such as are addicted to them: *be not, saith he, among wine-bibbers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh*, Prov. xxiii. 20. and then he adds, *for the glutton and drunkard shall come to poverty*, ver. 21. as we frequently see they do; God justly punishing their excess with the want of necessities.

BUT here we may observe, that as these two vices usually go together in practice, so are they both forbidden and condemned together by almighty God in the places before-mentioned; and so they are by our saviour in my text, saying, *take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness*. For here by surfeiting we are to understand that which is otherwise called *gluttony*, whereby men eat so much as to surfeit themselves, and by that means either shorten their own lives, or make them insignificant and useless in the world. And herein it is, that both the nature and greatness of this sin appeareth. God hath given you the use of his creatures to support, and you abuse them to destroy your lives; either immediately, as it often happens upon surfeits, or at least insensibly, and by degrees, most of those distempers which men are incident to being contracted this way. For by eating more than your stomachs can digest and turn into good nourishment, there must needs be many superfluous, crude, and noxious humours ingendered in your bodies, which, getting by degrees into an head, break out at length into some grievous, if not mortal distemper. Hence comes the gout, the scurvy, the stone, the palsy, the cholick, the fever, and many other, both acute and chronical diseases, which afflict men while they live, and at last bring them to their end. And therefore all, who thus indulge their appetites to excess, are plainly accessory to their own death; and so do not only offend God, but destroy themselves; or rather, they offend him by destroying themselves with those things which he designed for their preservation. And upon them is verified that

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of the psalmist, *their table is become a snare to them, and that which should have been for their welfare is made a trap*, Psal. lxi. 22.

AND what if you feel not these sad effects of gluttony as yet? it is not long but you will certainly do it. And in the mean while ye cannot but find by your own experience, that you make your lives, at least for some time, as useless and unserviceable to God and the world, as if ye were already dead. For when your hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and gluttony, are not your heads heavy? your brains stupid? and your whole body restless and uneasy? and what then can you be fit to do? nothing certainly, except it be to sin: that, I confess, you are now prepared for, and ready every moment to fall into, into any sin, to which either the devil, the world, or the flesh can tempt you: gluttony exposing the soul to as many vices, as it doth the body to diseases. But as for any service which you owe to God, that ye can have no mind to; or if ye had, you are altogether unfit for it.

AND yet how many are there amongst us, who allow themselves in this mischievous and destructive sin, to the great scandal and reproach of our holy religion; and so there were in the very beginning of christianity, which made the apostle complain, and say to the *Philippians*, *many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly*, Phil. iii. 18. Oh that we had no ground to take up the same complaint now! but alas, we cannot but be all sensible there is too much occasion for it; there being too many amongst us who mind little or nothing else, but how to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. As if they had nothing else to do, but only to undo themselves both soul and body.

BUT I hope better things of you, such as accompany salvation, which, I am sure, this doth not. Howsoever let me beg of you never to give way to this sin. God hath given most of you all things richly to enjoy, at least enough both to sustain and refresh you: and you may and ought to make use of what he hath given you for those ends, and thank him that gives it: *for every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving*, 1 Tim. iv. 4. But as the creatures of God are all good in themselves, take care to make them so to you, by using them so as not to abuse them. Remember your saviour's words, *take heed that your hearts be never overcharged with surfeiting, or gluttony*. And for that purpose look upon all these sensual pleasures, not as they come, but as they go away, and leave a sting behind them. Remember him in the gospel, who fared sumptuously every day he lived, but afterwards had not a drop of water to cool his tongue. Above all things endeavour all ye can to abstract your minds from all things here below, and inure yourselves to those manly, those pure, those spiritual pleasures which are offered to you in the gospel of Christ; where God hath provided for you a feast of fat things indeed, which will fill and satiate, but can never surfeit you. Let others therefore go and feed with swine upon husks and dirt, but let us go and feed upon angels food, upon the bread of life, upon the body and blood of Christ, which will preserve and nourish both our souls and bodies to eternal life.

BUT here you must further observe, that our blessed saviour expressly chargeth you to have a care of drunkenness, as well as surfeiting; which both shews it to be a sin, and makes it so. For as, whatsoever he commands, it is our duty to perform it, because he commands it; so whatsoever he forbids, it is a sin to do that, because he forbids it. And therefore if God had never revealed his will any where else, as he hath done in several places, concerning this point, these words of our saviour oblige all men to avoid both surfeiting and drunkenness; but in a more especial manner they oblige all Christians, as being the words of Christ himself, in whom they believe, and from whom they expect salvation. And therefore, that drunkenness as well as as surfeiting is a sin, I need not prove; that appearing sufficiently from my text itself. But my business must be to shew how great a sin this is. It is true, all sins are great, as being committed against that great and almighty being that governs the world: but this is a sin of more than ordinary size; it is a sin of that magnitude, one of the greatest that mankind can be guilty of; as you will soon acknowledge when you once understand the nature of it.

FOR

FOR which purpose we must call to mind what I observed before; that as God made, so he maintains us out of the earth, having appointed and empowered several parts of it to nourish and preserve us in health and life, so long as he sees good. And as the dust of the ground, out of which God made man, was not perfectly dry, but had some moisture in it, out of which he formed the blood, and the whole radical moisture of the body; so our bodies are still preserved, not by mere dry earth, but by some kinds of earth moistened or mixed with water, which he therefore created together with it, as part of the globe of the earth, and caused it to circulate so, as to run not only upon the surface, but likewise within the bowels of the earth, as our blood circulates through all the parts of our body. By which means, as all the parts of the earth, especially those which are designed for nourishment, are moistened, so that moisture passing thro' several sorts of earth, is turned into several sorts of liquors, according to the quality of that earth through which they pass. And hence it is, that besides plain water, which is the only drink of the greatest part of mankind, there are some liquors of so subtle and spiritous a nature, that they do not only moisten the body, but actuate and quicken it; and being taken in too great a quantity, enflame and overpower the animal spirits that are in it.

HENCE therefore, it being necessary to use some kind of liquors to moisten what we eat, and so to make it fit for nourishment; hence, I say, it cannot but be lawful to use either water itself, or any sort of liquor that will serve for that purpose; as the mixture of corn with water, which we call beer or ale, or else the juices of several sorts of fruits or plants, and particularly the vine, which God hath fitted and designed both to nourish and refresh us: as *David* observeth, where he saith, that God made *grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the use of man, that he might bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make him a cheerful countenance, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart*, *Psal. civ. 14, 15.* where as he plainly asserts all our food to come out of the earth, as I observed, so he saith particularly of wine, that it maketh glad the heart of man; which it would not do, had God designed it for that end. And to use it for that end for which he designed it, cannot be unlawful. And therefore we find our blessed saviour himself did not only use it, but when he was at a feast where they wanted it, he exerted his infinite power in turning water into wine, *John ii.* which certainly he would never have done, if it was not lawful to drink it, and to drink too as they do at a marriage-feast, to cheer and refresh their spirits.

BUT wherein then lies the sin? not in using, but in abusing the creatures that God hath made for our use; not in drinking, but in drinking too much, in drinking to excess, more than your bodies require, or your heads and hearts can bear; as our saviour himself here explains it, requiring you, that your hearts be not overcharged with drunkenness; whereby he plainly shews wherein the sinfulness of it consisteth, even in the heart's being overcharged with drinking; when, instead of being refreshed, you are depressed, as the word signifies, and born down with it, being made more dull and heavy, or any way disturbed or discomposed in your minds, and so more unfit for business than you were before.

AND to the same purpose *St. Paul* chargeth the *Ephesians*, saying, *be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess*, *Eph. v. 18.* He doth not forbid them to drink it, but to drink it to excess: it is the excess that is the sin. It is that and only that which he in the name of God forbids; all manner of excess, not only in the highest, but even to the least degree, when men drink never so little more than what will do them good. What will do them good is allowed to all; and therefore *St. Paul* himself said to *Timothy*, *drink no longer water, but use a little wine, for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities*, *1 Tim. v. 23.* He bids him drink wine, but it must be but little. He bids him drink a little, not to overcharge his heart, but to comfort his stomach, and help the infirmities, which his drinking nothing but water before had made him subject to. In short, he allows him to drink so much wine with his water, or without it, as will do him good, and no more. And so long as men keep themselves within these bounds, they do no more than what they lawfully may, and in some cases ought to do, especially when they are directed to it by an honest and able physician.

BUT

BUT the mischief is, that men are apt to go beyond these bounds, to drink wine and strong liquors, not only so much as will do them good, but so much as to hurt themselves: and this is that which God forbids, who in all his commandments designs our good, and in this particularly, commanding us to abstain from excessive drinking, because it is prejudicial and hurtful to us: and so it is in many respects. I shall instance in some few, which will sufficiently demonstrate, that drunkenness, or excessive drinking of any sort of liquors, is one of the most mischievous and destructive vices that mankind can be guilty of, and that they, who are guilty of it, are the very worst of men.

FOR, *first*, if there was no more in it, but the loss of so much time as such people spend upon their debaucheries, this, one would think, is enough to deter any considering man from it. Men are apt to complain that their time is short, and yet they will make it shorter by throwing so much of it away, as they commonly do, to no other purpose but to make themselves and others drunk; spending whole hours together, and sometimes whole days in nothing else. But is this to redeem your time, or rather is it not to sell it? to sell it to the Devil himself for nothing, for worse than nothing, for sin and wickedness. What a sad account shall such men have to give of their time at the end of it? how can such men plead they had not time to pray, not time to read or hear God's word, not time to examine themselves, not time to prepare themselves for the holy sacrament, when they could find so much time to drink and be drunken? what can such men expect, but that the curse of God will light upon them? they may well expect it, for God himself hath said it shall; yea, he hath cursed them already, saying, *woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine enflame them*, Isa. v. 11. where he plainly makes their spending of so much time in drinking to be a great aggravation of their sin; itself also being a great sin, whether they be drunk or no. Some men, ye know, can sit long at it, and not be overtaken with it; and they are apt to glory in their strength, to triumph over others, and to flatter themselves with the thoughts that they are no way guilty. But hear, O vain man, what God saith, *woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink*, Isa. v. 22. He doth not only denounce his woe against those who are drunk, but likewise against such as are strong to drink, whether they be drunk or no. And therefore thou hast little cause to boast of such strength, but rather to be grieved and troubled at it, seeing the curse of God is entailed upon it. For which, among many others, one reason is, because such men, who by reason of custom, or by the natural temper of their bodies, are able to drink much, without being overcome with it; such men, I say, are apt to consume a great part of their time this way, and to make others do so too. And so be sure all do, who are given to this vice, and therefore have just cause to hate it, as robbing them of one of the best jewels they have, even their time. And so it doth of that which they in their folly account better, even their estates too; as many have found by woful experience, who having been born to considerable fortunes, yet, by living in this sin, have died beggars. There are too many instances to be seen of this every day; nothing being more usual than for men in this age to follow *Esau's* example in selling their very birth-right, though not for a mess of pottage, as he did, yet for that which is less worth, even for drink which they have no need of; and then find, when it is too late, the truth of that wise saying, that *the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty*, Prov. xxiii. 21. And it is well if they impoverish only themselves by it; for it is no great matter whether such persons have any estate or no, unless they would make better use of it. But, alas! they ruine their families too, and entail poverty upon their posterity for many generations; so that their children, and childrens children feel the sad effects of their excessive drinking, many years after.

NEITHER do they consume only their own estates, but God's creatures to no purpose, or rather a very ill one; abusing that to their own hurt, that would do a great many other people good. How many poor families might be maintained out of that which others spend in excessive eating and drinking? yea, that very drink, which some take excessively when they have no need of it, how many of those, who have need of it, might be refreshed and supported by it? what is, if this be not to imbezzle the talents that God hath put into your hands, and to

squander them away, so as that no body else shall be the better, and you your selves the worse for them.

I SAY, you yourselves the worse for them ; for so verily you are for every cup you take too much. For in that it is too much, it is plainly more than will do you good : and what is not good, must needs be bad for you, both as to your souls and bodies. Your bodies suffer more than you are aware of by it : by it your strength is impaired, your natural heat abated, your stomachs overcharged, your brains disordered, your blood inflamed, and your whole bodies overspread with the seeds of all manner of distempers. *Who hath wee, saith the wise man ? who hath sorrow ? who hath contentions ? who hath babbling ? who hath wounds without cause ? who hath redness of eyes ? they that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt wine,* Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. And as we read in *Ecclesiasticus, drunkenness increaseth the rage of a man 'till he offend ; it diminisheth strength, and maketh wounds,* Ecclus. xxxi. 30. The same is found true by daily experience. Look upon a man in drink, what an hideous creature is he now become ? more like a brute than a man. His colour is changed, his eyes stare, his tongue falters, his head and his hands shake, his breath is short, his knees weak, so that he staggers to and fro, and at length perhaps falls down into a kennel, the fittest place for such brutes to lie in. Insomuch, that the very sight of a drunken man is enough to make men abhor and loath the very thoughts of being drunken. And yet this is nothing in comparison of what they must needs feel inwardly. For if ye look into their inward parts, you might there see that their stomachs are sick, their lungs pant, their hearts beat, their heads ach, their blood ferments and boils, and at length breaks forth into a fever, or some other mortal distemper, which usually shortens their days, and puts an end to their miserable life by a more miserable death ; which follows so naturally upon excessive drinking, that it is almost a miracle that any common drunkards live out half their days. And if any of them do happen to hold out to the usual age of men, it must be imputed unto God, either to his mercy waiting for repentance, which is very rare ; or else to his justice, continuing them longer in this world, to punish them the more severely in the next ; which he hath given them sufficient warning of, by making this sin itself in some measure its own punishment ; and so beginning to punish them for it, so soon as ever they have committed it : as they always experience, and sometimes have confessed, being forced to do so by the pains and diseases their bodies are afterwards tormented with. And it would be well for them, if it went no farther : but drunkenness disorders the soul as much as it doth the body ; or rather disordering the body, it disorders the soul too. For the soul, whilst it is united to the body, making use of the animal spirits that are in it, as its instruments whereby it performs its several operations ; when they are out of tune, the soul can do nothing as it ought, no more than an artificer can work without tools, or such as are not fit for his purpose. But excessive drinking causeth such fumes and vapours in the stomach, which flying up into the brain, where the animal spirits chiefly reside, put them all out of order, either scattering them out of their places, or overpowering them so as to make them stupid and unactive, no way fit for the soul to make use of. Hence some, by drinking to excess, are deprived of all sense and reason, as if they had no souls at all, but were mere stocks, fit for nothing but to be cast into the fire and burnt, as they will be ere long. And though it doth not go so far, but they have still something like reason left them, yet it serves them to very little purpose. They cannot think a wise thought, understand nothing clearly, nor judge of any thing aright. Their imaginations are disturbed, their consciences stupified, and their passions all in a hurry, irregular, and extravagant ; so that at present they are in a kind of *delirium*, or phrensy, not knowing what they say, or what they do, or what is done to them ; as the wise man excellently describes it, where forewarning men of drunkenness, he saith by that, *thou shalt be as he lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick ; they have beaten me, and I felt it not : when shall I awake ? I will seek it yet again,* Prov. xxiii. 34, 35. And although this *delirium* continues in its height only while the liquor is working in their brains, yet their brains are thereby so clouded, their understanding so darkened, and all their faculties discomposed, that they are never wise when sober, as the wise man observes, saying,

wine

wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise; or, as the word in the original signifies, shall not be wise, Prov. xx. 1. so that as no wise man will be ever drunk, so no drunkard is ever a wise man.

By this therefore we may see into the reason which our saviour here gives wherefore he would not have your hearts overcharged with drunkenness, even *lest that day*, the great day of judgment, *come upon you unawares*. Your eternal state depending upon the issue of the proceedings upon that day, he often cautions you to prepare yourselves, and have your accounts ready against that time, whensoever it shall happen. And here in a more particular manner he adviseth you to have a care of drunkenness, as that which will make you put the evil day far from you, 'till at length it come unawares upon you, and surprize you when you do not so much as think of it, much less can be ready and prepared for it. For when your hearts are overcharged with drunkenness, it is impossible you should be fit to do that which is the greatest work you have to do; for indeed you can do nothing at all, not the least thing that is, as ye ought to do it. You cannot pray or meditate upon God; you cannot exercise any repentance or faith in Christ. But why do I speak of such things which a drunkard is no more able to do, than a brute beast is. He cannot so much as mind his particular calling, nor do any worldly business without spoiling it: all that he is fit for is to sin, and that, I confess, he is always fit for. Fit for it, did I say? yea, he is desperately bent upon it, impetuously inclined to sin; to all sin, one as well as another; to lust, fury and revenge; to swearing, cursing, lying, brawling, fighting, murder, any thing that comes in his way. There is no sin but some have committed it in their drink; and if there be any that a drunken man doth not commit, it is not because he would not, but because he could not. He had not an opportunity, otherwise he would have committed that as well as any other. For a man in such a condition hath no sense of the difference betwixt good and evil: for *wine*, as the prophet speaks, *hath taken away his heart*, Hos. iv. 11. His reason, his understanding, his conscience is gone: and therefore all sins are alike to him. Hence it is that this sin never goes alone, but hath a great train of other sins always following it: insomuch that it cannot so properly be called one single sin, as all sins in one.

WHEREFORE, as ever ye desire to avoid any sin at all, ye must be sure to avoid drunkenness, which will so expose you to all manner of sin, that you can never be secure from falling into any whatsoever. And as you must avoid the sin itself, so likewise all that are addicted to it. It is not mine, but the wise man's counsel, *be not amongst wine-bibbers*, Prov. xxiii. 20. And St. Paul commands, *if any one be a drunkard, with such a one not to eat*, 1 Cor. v. 11. It is not enough that you be not drunk with them, but you must not so much as drink with them, nor eat with them, nor keep them company any more than ye needs must; and that both for their sakes and your own: for their sakes, that so they may be ashamed of themselves, and of their sin, when they see all sober men abhor and shun them like so many wild beasts: and for your own sake, lest you by degrees learn it of them, and become like to them, the worst sort of cattle upon the face of the earth, that only cumber the ground, doing good to none, and worst of all to themselves, who live like brutes; and it would be well for them if they could die so too, so as never to live again. But that cannot be; live again they must, and that for ever; but where? in heaven? no surely, they can never come thither. For God hath expressly decreed, that *no drunkard shall ever inherit the kingdom of heaven*, 1 Cor. vi. 10. Gal. v. 21. Indeed, what should they do there? there is neither wine nor strong drink to be had; and therefore heaven would seem a sad place to them. But they need not fear being sent thither; they have God's word for it that they shall not, and therefore they may believe it.

BUT where then must they live? in a place more fit and proper for them, even in hell, where they will meet with their old companions again, not to be merry, but to weep and wail, and gnash their teeth together; where they shall have drink enough, but it shall be only fire and brimstone; where they shall be drunk continually, but it shall be with nothing else but the fury and vengeance of almighty God; where, for the many hogsheads of good liquor they consumed upon earth, they shall not have so much as one drop of water to cool their
enflamed

enflamed tongues : where all their drunken bouts will return upon them, and afflict and torment them over-again. In short, where *the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* This shall be the potion of their cup to drink in the other world, who give themselves up to drunkenness in this.

Now put these things together ; how that drunkenness consumes a great part of that little time that God hath allotted you upon earth : it wastes your estates, and reduceth both yourselves and families into extreme poverty, or at least into great danger of it : it abuseth those creatures to your own damage, which God hath given you for your benefit and advantage : it impairs the health of your bodies, and breeds all manner of diseases in them : it blots out the image of God that was enstamped upon you, and makes you like to the beasts which perish. It deprives you of your reason, or at least of the right use and exercise of it : it exposeth you to all sorts of vice and wickedness that mankind is capable of committing : it maketh you unfit for all lawful and necessary employments, whether sacred or civil ; and at last throws you down into the bottomless pit, there to live with the Devil and his fiends for ever. Put, I say, these things together, and then judge ye whether it be not the height of folly and madness for any man to allow himself in such a sin as this ? whether they, who have been hitherto addicted to it, had not best to leave it off, and all others to take heed of ever falling into it, as they tender their own good and welfare.

I AM loath to suppose there are any here present of the first sort, who have hitherto indulged this great sin : God grant there be not ; but if there be, as I fear there are, give me leave, in the name of the most high God, to speak a few words to you. I confess I have no great hopes of doing good upon you ; it being rare for any, who have been accustomed to this sin, ever to repent of it, till it be too late ; and one of the usual effects of it is to harden men against reproof, and to blind their eyes so as that they cannot see the things belonging to their peace, before they are hid from them. And therefore I have little reason to expect that you will hearken to what I say, but rather despise and scorn it. Howsoever I desire you to consider, that I speak not in mine own name, but in his that made and redeemed you, and beseech you for his sake, as well as for your own, that you would lay aside your prejudices for a while, judge impartially of what you have now heard, and then bethink yourselves in good earnest, whether it be not your wisdom, and your interest as well as duty, to break off this sinful custom by a speedy and sincere repentance. I am confident you cannot but acknowledge it ; and therefore be advised to do it without any more ado. You cannot but be all sensible that it is a sin, a great and mischievous sin, and therefore make no apology for it, as that drinking increaseth your acquaintance, gratifies your customers, promotes your trades ; that it keeps you from being melancholy by making you forget your troubles, or that the temper of your bodies requires it, and custom hath made it so natural to you, that you cannot leave it, if you would. These are but vain excuses, and so they will appear at the last day ; yea, they appear to be so already to all sober men, and to yourselves too, when sober, if ye be ever so. For how can such acquaintance be worth getting, or such customers be worth keeping, which consume your time, your estates, and health ? what will it avail you to promote your trade, when by that you lose your souls ? and as for melancholy, is it not better to be so than mad ? and to remember your troubles so as to prevent or remove them, rather than by forgetting to hasten and increase them ? and how can you imagine that the temper of any man's body should force him to destroy his soul ? or that a man may not break an ill custom, as well as take it up, if he will ? I say, if he will, that is all ; be but willing, and the work is done. But that ye may be sure to be so, ye must give up yourselves to fasting and prayer : to fasting, that so you may testify your sorrow for your former intemperance, by your future abstinence : and to prayer, that you may obtain the spirit of God to mortify the deeds of the flesh. To which you must add your constant endeavours to avoid all your drunken companions, your stedfast resolution, by the grace of God, to keep yourselves for the future within the bounds of temperance and sobriety ; and frequent meditations upon the dismal effects of drinking to excess. By these and such like means you may as easily conquer this sin, as you was ever conquered by it. But if you will not use them, I shall say no more to you, but you will one day wish you had.

BUT

BUT as for such, who have hitherto by God's blessing been kept from this sin, if ye be antient, you cannot but have found so much benefit by temperance, that ye need no arguments to persuade you to it. If ye be young, I must advise you, as ever you desire to be old, or wise, or good, or happy in this world or the next, above all things take heed of drunkenness: you live in the midst of a wicked and naughty world, where you will meet with many temptations to all sin, and particularly to this. Have a care of yourselves. If ye know of any that are given to drinking, never keep them company, lest ye be infected. If any one entice you to drink excessively, account him your mortal enemy, employed by the Devil to ruine and destroy you. If any one offer you but one cup too much, look upon it as poison; for so it is both to your souls and bodies. Wheresoever you are, whatsoever ye do, avoid all occasions of drinking to excess, lest you have cause to repent of it when it is too late, or, which is worse, never repent at all.

IN short, let me beseech you all to carry these words of our blessed saviour always in your minds, *take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, or the cares of this life, and so the day of judgment come upon you unawares.* And as you profess yourselves to be christians, act accordingly. Keep yourselves as much as may be always in an even frame and temper, that your bodies be never overburthened with meat or drink, nor your minds with worldly cares; but always live so as to be always ready to die; that whensoever God shall call for you, you may appear with comfort before him, and enjoy those pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore, by the merits and mediation of our ever blessed saviour. *To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour, praise, and glory, both now and for ever.*

S E R M O N CXXXVI.

Profession useles without Practice.

MATTH. vii. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

SEEING the son of God was pleased to come from heaven to earth, on purpose that the sons of men might go from earth to heaven, as ever we desire to come thither, we must be sure to take special notice of whatsoever he hath said concerning the way and means whereby we may arrive there; and indeed of whatsoever he hath said that any ways concerns it: for seeing the great end of his conversing so long with men was to shew and direct them the way to eternal blis, questionless, whatsoever he said concerning it is of absolute necessity to be observed by us.

Now there are two things in this chapter, which our blessed saviour acquaints us with concerning the way to heaven. The *first* is, that it is a very narrow one, and by consequence that it is very hard both to hit upon it, and to walk in it, *ver. 13, 14.* which he therefore tells us, that we may not think it is so easy a matter to get to heaven as the world would have it. No, he would have us know, that as heaven is the highest happiness that we can attain to, so it is the hardest matter in the world to attain unto it; the way thither being so exceeding narrow, that no man can possibly keep himself within its bounds and limits, without extraordinary care and circumspection: the allurements of the world on one side, and our own corrupt hearts on the other, being so apt to entice us from it; so that until we have gotten that conquest over our lusts, as to live above the world, and ourselves too, it is impossible for us to walk directly towards heaven: but this we may all find is no easy matter to do, by reason of our natural inclinations to evil, and averseness from what is truly good; so that there is no sin can be subdued, no duty performed, no grace or virtue acted without a great deal of care and pains about it. And therefore it must needs be very difficult indeed to do whatsoever is required of you, in order to your eternal salvation, which none of you surely can now doubt of, seeing your saviour himself hath assured you of it; yet so, that he would not have any of you be discouraged from your endeavours after it, but rather excited and stirred up to a more diligent and serious prosecution of it. And therefore he advises you *strive to enter in at the strait gate*; intimating, that though the gate be strait, yet if you do but strive, you may enter in; and that though it be hard to get to heaven, yet it is possible; and though there are not many, there are some few come thither. And therefore why may not you be in the number of those few, as well as others? never a one here, whether high or low, rich or poor, but is as capable of enjoying eternal happiness, as any one that doth already enjoy it; yea, and you are all invited, commanded, and entreated to walk in the narrow way, and enter in at the strait gate that leads to life: and therefore if any of you miss of it, you may thank yourselves. Christ's arms are ready open to embrace you all that will but go unto him; and though heaven's gate be strait, it is always open to such as make it their business to enter in; you need not fear St. Peter's locking it against you; for both he and all the saints in heaven, as well as Christ himself, would rejoice to see you all crowding together in the narrow way, and striving which should press through the strait gate first: so that none of you can fail of everlasting glory, that are not failing to your selves in the pursuit of it; which, methinks, should make us all resolve to set apart and devote the residue of our lives wholly to the *working out our salvation with fear and trembling*, and to the *making our calling and election sure*, so as to make it our great and only care and study in this world to prepare for a better, and to make sure of that eternal life which Christ himself hath purchased for us with his own most precious blood; yet so as that we must use the utmost of our endeavours too for our attainment of it. And therefore let me desire you again and again to remember and consider seriously with yourselves, that the same person, who died once that you might live for ever, hath told you in plain terms, that *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.*

Now our blessed saviour having there taught us how hard it is to get to heaven, in the words that I have now read, he shews who shall, and who shall not come thither; *not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, &c.* The meaning of which words, in brief, is this, that the bare profession of the christian religion, without the practice of what is required in it, will never bring a soul to heaven.

BUT for our clearer understanding, and better improvement of these words, we shall consider them in the same order wherein they were delivered by Christ himself.

FIRST, saith he, *not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* As if he should have said, although I am come down from heaven, on purpose that by me men might go thither; yet I would not have you think that your calling me *Lord*, and professing that religion which I teach to be the way to heaven, will ever bring you thither: no, there is more to be done than so, before you can be made partakers of such transcendent happiness as that is.

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AND verily there is more in these words of our saviour than at first sight there may seem to be ; for they plainly intimate to us, that men may not only profess the christian religion in general, but may make also a very considerable progress in the practice of what it requires, and yet for all that come short of heaven. Which consideration duly improved will be of great use in our way to heaven, both to direct and quicken us in it. For we are very apt to mistake, if not the common road, yet some by-path that leads to hell, for the way to heaven, merely because we see some walk in it, that make an outward shew and profession of religion. Inasmuch, that there was never any heresy so damnable, nor schism so dangerous, ever brewed in hell, or broached on earth, but it hath been swallowed down by some or other only upon this account, because it hath been commended and presented to the world under the colour of piety and religion, whereof the broachers of it have been strict and zealous professors : whereas was it but seriously considered, how like the Devil may look to an angel of light, and yet be still the prince of darkness ; and how great a shew a man may make of religion in the world, and yet remain in the gall of bitterness ; was this, I say, but rightly considered, we should not suffer ourselves to be so cheated as generally we are, both by others and ourselves too ; often conceiting ourselves to be in the road to heaven, when we are among the *Antipodes* to it ; and have no other ground for such a conceit, but only because we profess that religion which shews us the ready way thither.

THIS therefore being that which is the ruine and downfall of many amongst us, I shall do my endeavour at this time to prevent it, by shewing you, that the mere profession of the gospel, how high and specious soever it be, will never bring a soul to heaven, without the practice and performance of whatsoever is required by it ; or that a man may go a great way in the profession of the christian religion, and yet be no real christian, nor ever the better for it. Which being a matter of so great importance, I shall endeavour to handle it as clearly and distinctly as I can, that you may all know how far you may profess the name of Christ, and yet come short of heaven ; and by consequence how far you must go in the christian religion, if you desire to receive any benefit from it.

Now for the opening of this : *first*, I suppose, that all here present are baptized into the name of Christ, and by that means are initiated into the christian religion : and I must confess also, that it was always the opinion of the primitive, as well as it is of our church, that baptism, or the washing of regeneration doth so cleanse us from all sin, whether original or actual, that if a person die after baptism, without the commission of any actual sin, he is undoubtedly saved by virtue of the blood of Christ mystically sprinkled on him. And hence it was, that in the primitive times, especially for the two or three first centuries after our saviour's passion, it was very common for those, who were converted from heathenism to christianity, to defer their baptism as long as ever they could, sometimes to the very day of their death, merely upon this opinion which they had conceived of it, that if they committed no actual sin after baptism, they were sure to go to heaven. And, questionless, there is a great deal more virtue in baptism rightly administer'd, than people generally think of. But howsoever you must not think that baptism is all that the christian religion requires of you ; or that all that are baptized shall be saved, whether they repent and believe, or no. By baptism indeed you are admitted into the society of christians, and are put into a capacity of obtaining pardon and salvation by him into whose death ye are baptized. But if you look no further, you are never likely to attain it ; for at the same time that our saviour gave his apostles their commission to baptize all nations that turned to his religion, he gave them order likewise to *teach them whatsoever he had commanded them*, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. And therefore, without observing the commands of Christ, our baptism will avail us nothing ; this is but our entrance into the christian religion, and if we go no further, it is impossible we should come to the end of it, even the eternal salvation of our souls, which thousands, I fear, that are baptized never arrive at.

NAY further, you may not only be baptized into the name of Christ, but acknowledge him too to be the son of God, and the only saviour of the world, and yet not be saved by him ; for the devils themselves could not but acknowledge this,

this, saying, *what have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of God*, Matth. viii. 29. And yet, for all that, I suppose you'll all grant that they were far enough from heaven; and so may any of you be for all your acknowledging and believing the same thing as they did. For though this be the true orthodox faith which you ought to live and die in, yet this is not all which the gospel requires of you in order to your eternal happiness, neither will it signify any thing to confess Christ with your mouth, unless you believe in him, and obey him with your heart.

AND what though you go further still, and not only acknowledge him to be your Lord and master, but frequently call upon, and pray unto him under that notion? yea, and with a great deal of zeal and fervency repeat it over and over again, saying, *Lord, Lord*; will this bring you to the kingdom of heaven? no, he himself, whom you call *Lord*, hath told you in plain terms, *not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*. But you may say, that you do not only acknowledge him to be your Lord, but testify this your acknowledgment by waiting upon him to hear his word, and to be acquainted with his will and pleasure. To that I answer, that it is very well you do so; but I must tell you withal, that neither is this all you must do, if you desire to be saved. For you may bring your bodies before him, and leave your hearts behind, according to that of the prophet, *Ezek. xxxiii. 31*. And what though you come really to hear the word, unless you practise it, you know what the apostle tells you, *not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified*, Rom. ii. 13. And our blessed saviour himself says, *if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*, John xiii. 17. So that it is neither your hearing, nor yet your knowing the will of God can make you happy, unless you do it. And therefore do not you think that coming to church and hearing of sermons will ever bring you to heaven, except you practise what you hear, without which the very sermons you hear will one day rise up in judgment against you; and, instead of carrying you nearer to heaven, will help to sink you lower into Hell. For, I suppose, you cannot hear so much as you do, but you must needs know what you ought to do: and your saviour himself assures you, that *the servant that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*, Luke xii. 47. which when I seriously consider, I cannot but tremble at the thoughts of that sad account that some will have to give another day, who never think they can hear too much, nor do too little. And amongst ourselves, how many thousand sermons have some of you heard in your life? what sin is there but you have sometimes heard it reprov'd? what duty but hath oft-times been press'd upon you? and therefore what can you have to answer for yourselves, who live in the frequent commission of any one sin, or in the constant neglect of any one duty whatsoever? neither do you think that you do God any service at all by such hearing as this is: what cares he for your coming to his house, and making a shift, tho' it be something tedious, to hear a sermon out? is this an acceptable service unto God, or any way advantageous to yourselves? not at all, unless you therefore only hear that you may practise, and practise faithfully what you hear; otherwise profess what you please, and hear what you can, you'll not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

NAY, you may go further still, and pretend much love to Christ, not only by praying often to him, and hearing as often from him, but also by speaking in his behalf, writing, yea, perhaps fighting for him too, and yet neither truly love him here, nor come unto him hereafter: for all this is no more than what the *Jews* would do for *Moses*, or the *Turks* for *Mahomet*, or what the papists do for the images which they worship and adore; and have wrote ten times more in their behalf, than ever they did for Christ. So may we spend and be spent for the gospel, and use the utmost of our power for the defence and propagation of it, and yet receive no benefit from it, because we may do it upon the same grounds, and from the same principles, that the professors of all other religions strive to maintain, and propagate the several religions which they do profess; because it is the religion of our country, and that which our forefathers both lived and died in. But he, that hath no better reasons than these are, to use his tongue, his pen, or strength for the christian religion, is as far from the kingdom of heaven as those who never yet heard of it.

THERE is still another thing behind, which, if seriously considered, would make our ears to tingle, and our hearts to tremble; and that is, that a man may make so great a progress in the christian religion, as to *prophecy in Christ's name, in Christ's name to cast out devils, and in Christ's name to do many wonderful works*, and yet be rejected by him for ever, ver. 22, 23. How safe should we think ourselves, how confident should we be of happiness, could you and I pretend and plead so much as this is for it? that we have not only preached, and heard, and prayed, but prophesied too in his name? and that our faith hath been so strong as to cast out devils, and work miracles in his name? but this we may do, and yet come short of heaven, as our saviour himself here intimates unto us, ver. 23. Where we may observe, how our saviour supposes that men may cast out devils, and do many wonderful things in his name. And so verily they frequently did for the first three centuries, nothing being more common in those days than for men to command devils in the name of Christ to depart out of possessed persons, and to work many other miracles for the propagation of the gospel, which then was necessary; for if the gospel had been propagated without miracles, that would have been a greater miracle than all the rest. Yet howsoever, we may further observe, that our saviour here makes the working of miracles in his name no true sign of a real christian; but that a man may use Christ's name for the working of miracles, and yet not partake of his merits for the salvation of his soul. Yea, whilst our saviour himself was living, there were some that cast out devils in his name, and yet were none of his followers or disciples, *Mark ix. 38*. And if the working of miracles be no infallible sign of a true saint, much less is it of a true church. So that if we should grant all the forgeries of the church of *Rome* to have been really done as they pretend they were, this could be no certain argument of their being a true church, no more than the working of miracles is that a man is a true christian, which our saviour himself plainly denies; asserting, that a man may do it and be damned; which certainly no true christian shall ever be. And by consequence he, that would be a real and a true christian, hath a great deal more to do than the casting out devils, or working miracles in Christ's name; neither is this at all necessary in order to our eternal happiness.

THUS we see how near we may come to heaven, and yet come short of it; how much we may do, and yet not do enough; you may be baptized in Christ's name, and acknowledge him to be the only saviour of the world; you may hear till your ears, and pray till your tongues, be worn to the stumps; you may dispute, you may write, you may fight for Christ and his religion too; yea, you may cast out devils in his name, and in his name do many wonderful works, and yet not work out your salvation, nor make your calling and election sure. And therefore all such amongst you, as really desire to come to heaven, must look higher, and do more than this amounts too; you must not take up with fair pretences instead of saving faith; nor with an outward profession instead of true religion; neither think yourselves any whit the better for being called *christians*, unless you be so. For assure yourselves, that your profession of the gospel, unless you live up to it, will be no diminution, but rather the greatest aggravation of your sins imaginable. For what will Christ say to you when you come to stand before his tribunal? What! you profess my name, and yet neglect my precepts! call me Lord, and yet nor serve and honour me! what! acknowledge my supremacy, and yet not observe my laws! believe me to be your king, and yet rebel against me! expect happiness and salvation from me, and not perform obedience to me! *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity*, that have not only sinned, but sinned against the clearest light, the highest love, the greatest mercies that ever were vouchsafed to the sons of men. You have been a reproach to my name, a shame to my gospel, a scandal to my religion; and therefore *depart from me into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*, *Matt. xxv. 41*. And doubtless, if there be any one place hotter than another in those infernal flames, that will be reserved for the hypocritical professors of the christian religion; for such as profess Christ with their mouths, and yet deny him in their hearts and lives, as Christ himself intimates, *Matt. xxiv. 51*. Wherefore let me advise you all not to rest contented any longer with the bare profession of the gospel; but if you desire to partake of what is promised, be sure to per-

form what is commanded in it ; and think not within yourselves that Christ will save you whether you repent or no ; or whether you obey his gospel or no. He himself hath told you, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3. and that it is not your speaking of him, or praying to him ; it is not your calling him *Lord, Lord*, will bring you to heaven, but you must do the will of God ; *not every one*, &c.

THUS therefore having seen how far we may go, and yet not come to heaven, we are now to consider how far we must go, if we desire to come thither. A question, which you'll all grant to be both pertinent and necessary to be resolved. For I dare say there is none of you but desire to be happy, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And let me tell you for your comfort and encouragement, you are all as yet in a capacity of being so. For you still enjoy those means of grace whereby, if you be not wanting to yourselves, through the mercies of God, and the merits of Christ, you may all e're long be so many glorified saints in heaven, perfectly free from all, both sin and misery, and perfectly happy in the enjoyment of the chiefest good. Yea, he that made you, as yet is so merciful unto you as to call upon you, and invite you all to partake of those celestial joys which he hath prepared for all those that love and fear him. And to manifest to all the world how desirous he is to have your company in heaven, himself was pleased to come down to shew you the way thither ; which he hath done so plainly, that none of you can miss of it, that will but sincerely endeavour to look after it, before all things else. And that you may not be mistaken, but may be sure to hit upon the right path that leads to life, he hath acquainted you in express terms, both how you may not, and how you may come thither ; assuring you, that the external profession of religion, and the frequent using of scripture language, saying, *Lord, Lord*, will never bring any of you to the kingdom of heaven ; but that, if you ever desire to come thither, you must do the will of that God that is in heaven : *not every one*, saith he, *that saith, &c. but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven.*

AND I desire you to observe, that these are the words of him that came into the world on purpose to save and conduct you to heaven, and by whom alone it is possible for you to come thither ; and therefore you must not think there is any way imaginable to evade them. But if ever you desire to know what heaven is, you must of necessity observe whatsoever is ordered and prescribed you in these words : but that you can never do, unless you first understand them. And therefore I shall endeavour to give you the true meaning and purport of them, in as plain and perspicuous terms as possibly I can, being desirous that every soul here present, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, may apprehend what our blessed saviour means by these words, and by consequence may know what they must do in time, that so they may be happy for ever.

Now, therefore, for the right understanding of these words, there are three things to be considered : *First*, what is that will of his father which our saviour here speaks of ; and then how, and why we must do that will, if we desire to come to heaven.

As for the *first*, I suppose, I need not tell you whom it is that our saviour means by *his father which is in heaven*, even the most high supreme governour and possessor both of heaven and earth ; which glorious being having made all things by his almighty power, and still preserving and ordering all things by his infinite wisdom and goodness, his will must needs be a law to all the creatures in the world : that is, all creatures are bound to do whatsoever they know to be the will and pleasure of almighty God, or rather, whatsoever is revealed to them to be so, whether they take notice of it or no : for it is God's revelation of his will that obligeth us to the performance of it. Now God hath been pleased to make use of several means whereby to discover his will to mankind. To *Adam* he revealed his will by immediate inspiration ; to *Noah, Abraham*, and the rest of the patriarchs, by vision and appearances, discoursing with them ; to the *Jews* by the prophets ; and to all the world by his son *Jesus Christ*, and after him by his apostles. Which several revelations of God's will are by his wonderful providence gathered together, and preserved in the books of the old and new testament, which by consequence contain the whole will of God which it is necessary for men to do, in order to their attaining everlasting happiness.

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To know therefore what is the will of his father, which our saviour here speaks of, we must consult the scriptures wherein alone it can be found. But if we search them, they tell us in general, that *this is the will of God, even your sanctification*, 1 Thess. iv. 3. where by *sanctification* we are to understand the devotion or dedication of ourselves wholly unto the service of the living God, so as to be really and truly holy; so that universal holiness is a thing indispensably required in order to our entering into the kingdom of heaven. Where by *holiness* we are to understand the rectitude of all the faculties of the soul, and the members of the body, or the right temperament of the whole man, whereby all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body, keep themselves within those bounds and limits, and perform those several acts and duties which he that made them hath prescribed them, so as to live as those who are none of our own, but wholly God's. *For we are bought with a price, and therefore should glorify God both in our body and spirit which are his*, 1 Cor. vi. 20.

NEITHER hath it pleased the most high God to acquaint us only in general, that it is his will we should be holy, but he hath shewed us moreover, in a particular manner, the several acts of holiness which it is his will and pleasure we should perform, both as to himself, and also to one another.

First, As to himself: it is the will of God, that you know and acknowledge him the only creator, preserver, governour, possessor and disposer of the world; *glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders*, Exod. xv. 11. That it is in him that you live, and move, and have your being, Acts xvii. 28. and whosoever doth not thus know him, he looks upon as a rebel against him, *Isa. i. 2, 3, 4.*

It is the will of God moreover, that you really love and prefer him before all things in the world besides, so as to love nothing above him, nothing beyond him, nothing equal to him, nothing at all in comparison of him. For thus hath he commanded you, saying, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*, Deut. vi. 5.

It is the will of God also, that all the desires of your hearts be fixed upon him as their proper object, and all the inclinations of your souls concur and meet in him as their only center, so as not to stoop so low as to lick up the serpent's food, nor debase yourselves so much as to make the fading riches, the carnal pleasures, or the deceitful honours of this transient world the object of your souls desires; but that your desires be carried so far above whatsoever is here below, as to rest no where but in the chiefest good. That this is his will and pleasure he hath told you by his son, saying, *seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof*, Matt. vi. 33. and by his apostle, saying, *set your affection on things above, not on things which are upon the earth*, Col. iii. 2.

FURTHERMORE, it is the will of God, that you fear and dread nothing in the world but him; that your hearts be possessed with such awful and reverential apprehensions of his greatness, wisdom, justice, power and sovereignty in and over the world, as not to dare to do any thing that is offensive or displeasing unto him; but still you must *sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and make him your fear and your dread*, *Isa. viii. 13.*

MOREOVER, it is the will of God, that you trust and confide on nothing in the world but him; that in all your fears and dangers, in all occurrences and conditions whatsoever, you still support yourselves, and keep up your spirits with the serious consideration of the benignity of the divine nature in itself, and with an humble confidence on the promises which God hath made unto us in Jesus Christ, without depending at all upon created helps, or expecting any thing from second causes, according to the rule laid down by the wise man, *trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding*, Prov. iii. 5.

It is the will of God likewise, that you submit your wills to his, and patiently acquiesce in all his dealings towards you, so as not to murmur against them, or to be troubled at them, but still rest fully satisfied with them, as knowing them to proceed from infinite wisdom, and power, and goodness; yea, so as still to *rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation*, Hab. iii. 18.

IN a word: it is the will of the most high God, that you humble yourselves under his mighty hand, confess your sins unto him, and abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes before him; that you implore his mercy in the pardon of your sins, and his grace for the assistance of your souls in the performance of what he is pleased to require of you; that you delight yourselves in drawing
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nigh unto him, and esteem it your happiness to enjoy communion with him; that you admire his power, adore his goodness, praise and magnify his great and all-glorious name; that whether you *eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, ye do it to his glory*, 1 Cor. x. 31. That you *know the God of your fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Yea, that *your light so shine before men, that others may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven*, Matt. v. 16.

AND then, as to your behaviour towards one another, it is the will of God, that you *do unto others, as you would have others do to you*, Matt. vii. 12. that you *do not go beyond or defraud each other*, 1 Thess. iv. 6. that it is the will of God, that you *love one another as Christ hath loved you*, John xv. 12. it is the will of God, that *ye walk with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*, Eph. iv. 2, 3. It is the will of God, that you be loyal to your sovereign, obedient to your governors, peaceable with your neighbours, faithful to your friends, loving to your enemies, liberal to the poor, helpful to the weak, just and equitable towards all.

IN a word, that will of God is, that you *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, Tit. ii. 12.

THUS therefore you have seen the sum and substance of that will of God, which, our saviour himself here tells you, you must observe or never come to heaven. But some perhaps may wonder why I have made no mention of faith in Christ, which the scriptures make absolutely necessary to our salvation. To that I answer, that I have already mentioned it, though perhaps you took no notice of it; and that was in speaking of those acts of piety which God wills us to perform immediately to himself, whereof I told you trusting on God was one. And certainly to trust and rely upon the promises which God hath made unto us of pardon and salvation in Jesus Christ, and by consequence to trust in Christ for the accomplishment of those promises, is not only one of the highest acts of piety which we can exert, but it is that very grace of faith on which our everlasting happiness doth so much depend. And therefore it is ridiculous to assert or fancy, that our saviour's saying here, that *he which doth the will of God shall enter into heaven*, implies, that moral virtues or good works are sufficient to bring us thither without faith in Christ, whereas faith itself is unquestionable one of the highest acts of obedience that it is possible for us to perform; so that whosoever doth not believe in Christ, doth not fulfil the moral law, but is deficient in one of the principal parts of it; for he doth not trust in God, but rather makes him a liar, as the apostle tells us, 1 John v. 10. He therefore, that would do the will of God, must of necessity believe in Christ, because it is God's will we should do so. And whosoever believes in Christ, shall most certainly be saved; not by virtue of his faith, as it is an act of grace in general, or part of our moral obedience, but because whosoever believes and trusteth on Jesus Christ, and on the promises made in him for pardon and acceptance, God is pleased both to pardon and accept him, by virtue of his merits and mediation on whom he trusteth. So that it is not by our believing in Christ, but by Christ in whom we believe, that we can ever come to heaven. And 'tis very observable, that our blessed saviour himself, who here tells us, that he that doth the will of his father shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, elsewhere saith, *and this is the will of him that sent me, that whosoever seeth the son, and believeth in him, may have everlasting life*, John vi. 40. From whence it is plain, that though he that doth the will of God shall have everlasting life, yet it is not because he doth the will of God, but because it is God's good will and pleasure, that *whosoever believeth in his son should have everlasting life*, in and through him on whom he doth believe.

THUS, therefore, I have shewn what that will of God is which we must do, if we desire to come to heaven, even that we obey the precepts of the law, and believe in the promises of the gospel. Hence it was that our saviour made this the subject of the first sermon he preached, *repent and believe the gospel*, Mark i. 15. Which two commands do most certainly contain the whole will of God, which men are bound to observe in order to their everlasting happiness: Repentance there implying, not only our mourning for sin, but also our turning from it; neither our eschewing of evil only, but likewise our doing good. And believing the gospel is the same with believing in Christ, on which the pardon of

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our sins, the acceptance of our persons, and the eternal salvation of our souls depend.

By this time, therefore, I hope you will understand what is that will of his father, of which our saviour here saith, that he who doth it, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. But it is not enough that you know what is the will of God which you ought to do, unless you know likewise how you ought to do it: which therefore is the next thing to be considered: and to prepare you the better for the right understanding of it, give me leave to premise unto you, that it is an harder matter to do the will of God, and there is a great deal more required to it, than men commonly think of. For the mere doing the thing that God wills, is not always doing the will of God; for his will and commands extend to the manner, as well as to the matter of our actions, having prescribed not only what we should do, but how we should do it too. And therefore, he that fails either way, either by not doing it, as he wills it should be done, cannot be said to do the will of God.

Now, we must know that God's will is to be observed by all his creatures, in the highest manner that they are capable of observing it. The sun, moon and stars, and all other inanimate, yea, and mere sensitive creatures too, not being endowed with any inward principle, whereby to reflect upon the commands which he that made them, hath laid upon them, they do the will of God, sufficiently by observing the motions, and keeping the stations which he hath set them. But man being a rational creature, endowed with an understanding to know, and with a will to chuse, as well as with power to do what God commands him, it is not sufficient that he doth it, unless his understanding and will too be exercised in the doing of it.

First, THEREFORE, to our doing the will of God, it is necessary that our understandings be employed in considering that it is his will, and commending it to us under that notion, that so we may not only do it, but may therefore do it, because it is God's will and pleasure; otherwise though we may perhaps do what God wills, yet we cannot be said to do his will, because we do not do it under that notion, or upon that account because it is his will. As for example; you give an alms to the poor; it is very good, and it is the will of God you should do it; yet if you do it only out of compassion, or upon some bye and sinister account, not considering the will of God in it, God doth not look upon his will as performed, nor on himself as concerned in what you do, any farther than to punish you for not observing his will. Again, you are now here in the presence of God, where it is God's will you should be; but though some of you may, I fear many of you do not do the will of God in coming hither, not coming out of any such design or intention as to obey the will of God, but only out of custom or formality, or perhaps being servants, your masters, or being children, your parents would have you come; and by consequence, it is their wills rather than God's, which you regard and fulfil in coming. Neither can you be ever said to do the will of God, unless you therefore, or upon that consideration, only do it because it is the will of God: and one single act of obedience performed after this manner, shall be more acceptable to God, and more advantageous to yourselves, than all the most plausible and specious actions of your whole life besides; as our saviour himself saith, that *he that giveth to a disciple a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, shall have his reward*, Matt. x. 42. so whatsoever we do, if we but do it *eo nomine*, because it is the will of God, we shall most certainly find the benefit and comfort of it.

NEITHER are our understandings only, but our wills likewise to be employed in doing the will of God, so as to make it the matter of our choice, and to will the doing of it, because God doth so. And verily, there is more in this than commonly we are aware of; yea, so much that we can do nothing of God's will without it: forasmuch as the very essence of true obedience consisteth, in the inclination of our wills to God's, in willing what he wills, and because, he wills it. So that the great art and mystery of doing well, lies in your willingness and inclination to do it; without which, howsoever glorious our actions may seem to men, they are altogether odious and abominable unto God? because at the same time that we outwardly perform them, we have an inward averseness and reluctancy against them. And so, though we may seem to do what God requires, yet doing it against our wills, it must needs be contrary to God's will too, who requires,

our whole man, soul as well as body, to be employed in the doing of what he commands; and hath enjoined us to *serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Thus David, *I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart*, Psal. xl. 8. This is doing the will of God indeed, when our wills run thus parallel with God's, and we are as willing and ready to obey as he is to command; when we delight to do the will of God, and please ourselves in pleasing him, this is that which our saviour here calls *doing the will of his father which is in heaven*.

FROM whence, in the last place, it necessarily follows, that he who would do the will of God, must do the whole will of God; for he whose heart is so inclined and bent to God, as to delight to do his will, because it is his, he cannot but delight in all the commands of God, one as well as another, because they are all equally the will of God: he doth not will one duty or virtue more than another, so neither should we: we must not pick and chuse, nor think to put God off with a partial obedience, which indeed is no obedience at all, nothing deserving that glorious title, but a sincere respect unto all the commandments of God, *Psal. cxix. 6*.

WELL then, if you would do the will of God, you must not content yourselves with some particular acts of piety towards God, and equity towards your neighbour; but whatsoever God hath bid you do in scripture, you must be sure to do it, and that with cheerfulness and delight too, as it is the command of God, so as to use the utmost of your endeavour in observing all things that are required of you: and yet when all is done, look upon yourselves as unprofitable servants, for that is the will of God too, *Luke xvii. 10*. as also that they depend on Christ alone for pardon and acceptance. And whosoever thus doth God's will, need not fear but he shall enter into the *kingdom of heaven*; for you have the words of Christ himself here for it.

HAVING thus shewn you what is the will of God which we must do, and how it is that we must do it, if we desire to enter into the kingdom of God, I hope I need not spend much time in convincing you, that unless you thus do this will of God, you shall never come thither. For I dare say, you all believe Jesus Christ to be the son of God, and the only saviour of mankind; and that it is only by him that you can be saved, and admitted into the kingdom of heaven: and therefore, you cannot, surely, but take his word for what you must do, in order to your obtaining that happiness which he himself hath purchased for you with his own blood. Yet you see that he himself hath told you, as plainly as he could, that it is not your calling him *Lord, Lord*, can bring you to heaven, but you must *do the will of his father which is in heaven*, if ever you desire to come thither. And therefore, do not you please yourselves with the groundless hopes of going to heaven when ye die, unless you do the will of God whilst you are alive; neither think that Christ so died for your sins, that you shall be happy whether you forsake them or no.

It is true, I do not deny, but look upon it as a fundamental article of the christian faith, and the only ground of all our hopes in another world, that Jesus Christ, by his death and passion, hath made full and compleat satisfaction to the justice of God, for the sins of mankind; or, as the apostle words it, *he was a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. but we must not think, that this satisfaction of Christ will be imputed, or this righteousness applied to any person that doth not perform the conditions required in order to it; or that doth not repent of his sin, and obey the gospel. For notwithstanding all that he hath done and suffered for us, we still find him pressing the duties of the moral law, and obedience to the will of God, as strictly as if we were to be saved by it; and particularly in my text he assures us, that for all his glorious undertakings for us, yet we must do the will of God, or else we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. And therefore it is in vain for us to expect pardon or salvation from Christ himself, unless we do what he hath commanded us, endeavouring to the utmost of our power, to adjust and conform our lives to the laws and commands of God, so as to be holy in all manner of conversation; without which *no man shall ever see the Lord*, as the Lord himself, whom we desire to see, hath told us, *Heb. xii. 14*.

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WHAT mean you then, my brethren, to bury up yourselves with vain and groundless hopes of happiness in another world, and in the mean while indulge yourselves in known sins, or live in the constant neglect of your duty to God or man? What, do you think to disannul the counsels, and revoke the decrees of heaven, to make Christ himself a liar, and his words void and of none effect? How then can you expect to go to heaven without doing the will of God, when Christ himself hath told you in plain terms, that you shall not? Have you any other way of getting to heaven but by him? No, God himself hath told you *there is no name given under heaven, whereby you can be saved, but the name of Christ*, Acts iv. 12. But what, will he allow you to continue in your sins, and yet save you for all that? or hath he given you an encouragement or intimation that you may be happy hereafter, howsoever you live here? or hath he granted you any such indulgence, as his pretended vicar at *Rome* doth, even for sins past, present, and to come? No, mistake not yourselves, he is so far from that, that while he was upon earth, he made it his business to convince men of the danger of sin, and the necessity of holiness, in order to eternal bliss. And therefore, have a care of fathering your sins on him: do not think that he will ever patronize them; nor feed yourselves with fancies, that when you come to stand before Christ's tribunal, he will absolve you from your sins, whether you have repented of them or no; or advance you into everlasting glory, whether you have obeyed the will of God or no. No, he hath told you beforehand, and that in as plain and familiar terms as possibly he could, that he will not; assuring you, that *none shall ever enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of his father which is in heaven*; which he therefore hath forewarned you of, that you may nor expect any such thing at his hands, as to be made happy hereafter, without being holy here. For that you can never be; there is an impossibility in the thing itself, that any soul should be happy, and yet not holy at the same time.

BUT seeing this notion, rightly considered and improved, will be of extraordinary use to convince you of the indispensable necessity of doing the will of God, and being holy in order to your being truly happy in another world, I shall endeavour to explain it more fully and clearly to you; to which end I desire you to consider seriously with yourselves what heaven is, and wherein that happiness consists which is to be had there. Heaven is a place you often speak of, and you all pretend a title to it: but what kind of place do you fancy it to be? Do you imagine it to be like the old *Elysian fields*, or the *Turkish paradise*, full of carnal pleasures and sensual delights? or do you conceive it like the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, which the *Jews* still look for, wherein you shall be enriched with earthly possessions, and have the highest titles of civil honour conferred upon you? or do you think it like any thing upon earth, which the men of this world are so much taken with? If these be your thoughts of heaven, I do not wonder that you mind it so little, and think holiness so impertinent, and unnecessary in order to it: for the more holy you are, the less happiness you'll find in such toys and trifles as these are.

BUT assure yourselves, if ever it shall please the most high God to bring any of you to heaven, you'll find it to be quite another thing from all the seeming pleasures of this lower world; consisting in nothing else but beholding, admiring, praising and enjoying the most high God. And though many of you may think this to be no such great happiness, as the scriptures would make it, yet questionless it is not only the greatest, but the only happiness that our souls are capable of; it being that which at their first creation they were designed for: and therefore were so composed, that they are always restless and out of tune, until they be fixed upon God, as their proper object; and are only so far happy as their inclinations meet in him, as their only center. And therefore, when the souls of just men are made perfect in heaven, so as to be able to behold the glory, and enjoy all the perfections that are concentrated in the chiefest good, then, and then alone, can they be said to be compleatly happy; having as much, yea, infinitely more than they can desire; and by consequence cannot but be fully satisfied with what they do enjoy. Hence *David* said, *in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore*, Psal. xvi. 11.

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CONSIDER this, and then tell me what happiness would it be for a sinful man to be in heaven; what joy or pleasure could he take in being there: alas there is nothing that he cares for or desires there: there is no such thing as houses or lands to be got, no silver or gold to be heaped up: there is no such thing as popular applause to please his fancy, nor sensual pleasures to delight his flesh: there is nothing but the vision and fruition of the chiefest good, which he esteems as nothing; yea, is naturally averse from it: so that he had rather be running from God, than drawing nigh unto him; or suppose he should have a mind, to partake of those pure and spiritual delights; so long as sinful, he is not qualified for it; he wants that inward rectitude, and right temper and disposition of mind, by which alone a man is capable of solacing and delighting himself in the enjoyment of the chiefest good; which depends not so much upon our being with him, as upon the bent and inclination of our souls to him: for it is not our being where God is, can make us happy; for then all the creatures in the world would be so, because God is with them. He is with the damned in hell, as well as with the saints in heaven: but they in hell are so far from taking pleasure in his presence, that it is a torment and a burden to them; because their souls being altogether impure and sinful, have a natural antipathy against his holiness and purity: whereas the saints in heaven being holy as he is holy, cannot but be ravished with the presence of his transcendent holiness; because it meets, as I may so say, with its likeness in them: which every sinful soul being destitute of, and so unlike to God, and by consequence averse from him, his presence affords more matter of trouble and disquiet, than of joy and comfort to them. Hence it is, that the apostle saith, *that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption*, 1 Cor. xv. 50. where by *flesh and blood*, we are to understand, men in their sinful and corrupt estate, who, as the apostle tells us, not only *shall not*, but *cannot inherit the kingdom of God*; being altogether incapable of enjoying the pleasures of it.

BUT to bring this home more close unto yourselves: suppose there be any here present at this time, as I fear there are too many, who are yet in their sins, their hearts not being as yet converted unto God, but still enclined to sin and vanity; suppose such of you should be immediately taken from the place where you are, and carried up into the highest heavens, and there placed not only amongst the glorified saints, but just by Christ himself, shining in all his glory; and there hear and see *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, together with the cherubins and seraphins, and the rest of the heavenly choir, praising and adoring the most high God, and the lamb that sitteth upon the throne; would you think this any great matter of joy and pleasure? or would not you rather wonder to see them so transported at that which you can fancy nothing of delight in? would you be ever the happier for being there? or rather, would you not be weary of the place, and long to be out of it? yes, questionless, you that think it so great a trouble to be an hour or two in the presence of God on earth, it would be much more irksome to you to be in heaven; where the company would seem troublesome, employment tedious, and heaven itself would seem more like hell than heaven, a place of torment rather than a place of pleasure to you: and all because you want that inward principle of real holiness, without which you are in an utter incapacity of being affected or delighted with the happiness of heaven. Insomuch, that a blind man may as soon delight in pictures, and a deaf in musick; yea, a brute beast may as soon surfeit himself upon the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration, as ever a sinful soul be ravished with those celestial joys, which are not only above him, but contrary to his very temper and inclinations; so that it is absolutely impossible for any man in the world to be happy, without being so thoroughly holy as to delight in doing the will of God; whereby alone it is, that any of us are *meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light*, as the apostle words it, Col. i. 12.

WONDER not therefore at our saviour's assertion here, that they only shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, that do the will of his father which is in heaven. For be sure none shall ever come to heaven, but such as are capable of enjoying the pleasures of it: but that no man is, or can be, whose heart is not so renewed and enclined to the living God, as always to do his will and pleasure to the utmost of his power and skill; which I have spent the more time in clearing up unto you, because one great reason why so many perish is, that they are not

thoroughly persuaded or at least do not consider, that they neither shall, or can, be happy hereafter, unless they be holy here. For were you but rightly convinced of this, methinks you that desire to go to heaven, should not dare to omit any thing that you know to be God's will, or do any thing that is contrary to it.

BUT I hope, by this time your judgments are so clearly informed concerning the necessity of a good, in order to an happy life, that I need not use any more arguments to prove it. Howsoever, give me leave to add, that you knowing this great truth will signify nothing, unless you live up unto it, your being convinced of the necessity of doing the will of God, in order to your going to heaven, will never bring you thither, unless you do it. And therefore, all such amongst you as unfeignedly desire to be happy for ever, be advised, without any more ado, to set yourselves, in good earnest, to do and perform whatsoever you know to be the divine will: and for your encouragement thereunto, give me leave to tell you, that whatsoever the world thinks of it, doing the will of God, is both the most honourable, the most pleasant, and the most profitable work that any of you can possibly be engaged in. And these three things, you know, *honour, pleasure, and profit*, are the principles, if not only motives and encitements, to your undertaking of any imployment whatsoever: but they no where concur so much as in doing the will of God.

FOR, *First*, That it is the most honourable employment in the world, you must needs grant, because it is the employment of the most honourable persons in the world: it is the continual employment of the saints upon earth, whom the Holy Ghost himself asserts to be honourable excellent persons, *Psal. xvi. 3. yea, more excellent then their neighbours*, Prov. xii. 26. it was the employment of Christ himself when he was upon earth, for *he went about doing good*, Acts x. 38. it is the employment of all the saints and angels now in heaven; nay, why do I speak of them? it is the employment of God himself; for he is always fulfilling his own will, and doing what he himself pleaseth. What a rare and honourable employment then must this needs be, for us poor mortals upon earth, to be always doing as the glorious angels in heaven do, and walk as Christ himself walked when he was here below; yea, to carry on the same designs in the world, which the most high God himself doth? and by consequence receive honour not from men, but God himself; for *them that honour me*, saith he, *I will honour*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. this honour have all the saints, and this honour may all you have that will but do the will of God.

NEITHER would I have you think that you must bid adieu to all true joy and pleasure, when once you devote your selves to the will of God: no, you'll be so far from that, that you'll then begin to know what true pleasure is, when you begin to do what is pleasing unto God; not only from that inward quiet and satisfaction in your minds, arising from the consideration of having performed your duty to almighty God, but likewise from the apprehension of God's love and favour to you, which he hath promised to all those that do his will. Hence the wise man tells us, *the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17. yea, they that do the will of God must needs live pleasantly in the world; it being God's will we should do so; he having commanded us to rejoyce always, and that in the Lord himself, *Phil. iv. 4.* so that whosoever doth the will of God, antedates the very joys of heaven, doing that in time which it will be his happiness to do for ever.

AND then, *Lastly*, for the profit and advantage which will accrue unto you, upon doing the will of God, it is infinitely more than I am able to express, or you to desire. For hereby you'll have a title to and interest in all things that are good for you, in heaven above, or earth beneath; or, as the apostle tells you, all things will be yours, 1 Cor. iii. 21. for indeed God himself will be yours, as I have observed upon another occasion; and whatsoever he is, or hath, will be made over to you; his wisdom yours to direct you; his mercy yours to pardon you; his power yours to protect you; his righteousness yours to cloath you; and his goodness and all-sufficiency yours to satisfy your souls for ever; and as what he is, he will be unto you: so whatsoever he hath he will confer upon you. Hath he a son? he hath died for you: hath he a spirit? that shall live with you: is earth his? that shall be your provision: is heaven his? that shall be your portion: hath he grace? that shall make you holy: hath he glory? that shall make you happy; for he will give you grace and glory, *and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*, Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

THUS we have seen, not only how necessary it is, in order to our everlasting happiness, to do the will of God, but also how honourable, pleasant, and profitable a thing it is to do it. And therefore, I hope, I need not use any more words, to persuade you to give up yourselves for the future, wholly to the service of God. I dare say, you all desire to go to heaven, and to be happy in the enjoyment of God for ever. But that you can never be, unless you do the will of God; Christ himself, you hear, hath told you so: and do you believe his words to be true, or do you not? I know you do; but what mean you then, that you do not resolve, by the grace and assistance of God, to set yourselves in good earnest upon doing whatsoever you know to be his will and pleasure? Dally no longer in a matter of such importance as this is: if you care not whether you go to heaven or no, what do you here; what need you concern yourselves about the way that leadeth thither? but if you really desire, as you pretend, to be admitted into heaven, and to live with God and Christ for ever, take my advice in few terms, grounded upon the words of our blessed saviour himself; take not up with a formal profession of the christian religion, nor rest in the external performance of some particular duties required in it. Think it not enough to come to church, and hear sermons: but repent of all your former sins, and be converted from them; and for the future, let it be your great and only care and study in this world, to square and order your thoughts and affections, your words and actions, all according to the laws and commands of the most high God. Love God above all things; trust on his promises; fear his threatenings; obey his precepts; believe in his son; reverence his name and word; and for his sake do nothing that you know to be a sin; omit nothing that you know to be your duty, either to God or men, to the utmost of your power: do thus, and you need not fear but your souls shall live, not only with saints and angels, but with Christ and God himself, for evermore.

S E R M O N CXXXVII.

Of Setting our Affections on Things above.

C O L O S. iii. 2.

Set your affections on things above, and not on things upon the earth.

MAN being a perfect microcosm, composed of two essential parts, a soul and a body, whereof the one was taken from the superior, and the other from this inferior world: hence it necessarily follows, that although both these parts do equally concur unto the constitution of a man, yet that which is of the purest nature, and most noble extract, must needs be designed at first to govern and rule the whole; and by consequence that man, according to his constitution, was always to live and act according to the dictates and commands of his rational soul, and not according to the inclinations of his sensitive part: but by the degeneracy of our first parents, in harkening to their senses rather than to their reason, our souls have ever since been

been subject to the tyranny of our rebellious senses: and that part which at first was placed at the stern, to sway and order the whole man, according to those principles of reason which were infused into it, upon that account, is now debased so low as to become a slave, to every one of these senses, which it was made to govern. And therefore, our great care in this world, should be to restore our souls to their throne and kingdom again; so that our flesh may not any longer usurp any power and dominion over them, as heretofore it hath done, and still will do, unless we keep a strict eye upon it.

Now as it was in the first *Adam*, that our souls lost their power, though not their right to govern, so it is only by the second, that they can ever recover it again. But our comfort is, that as in *Adam* we fell from heaven to earth, so in *Christ* we rose again from earth to heaven; as the apostle intimates in the foregoing verse, *if ye then be risen with Christ*; for when *Christ* rose, all those that by a true faith were united to him, could not but arise with him; yea, so rise with him in our souls, as to live with him in heaven, even whilst our bodies are upon the earth. For this the apostle makes the necessary consequent of our being risen with *Christ*: *if ye then be risen with Christ*, saith he, *seek those things which are above*, that is, your souls being now sanctified by *Christ*, and risen with him, have by that means got above your flesh and senses, and therefore, you should not mind them any longer, nor suffer them any more to get the upper hand, but your souls should still be soaring aloft, looking after their eternal concerns in heaven, *where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God*. Which that we may do, we must be sure to call in for all our affections from all things here below, and fix them only upon those things which are above, where our saviour now is, and where we hope to be for ever. And therefore, he adds, *set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth*.

HAVING thus brought you to the words, I shall endeavour to carry you through them, by explaining unto you the true meaning and purport of them; which it must needs behove you all rightly to understand, forasmuch as you all desire, I hope, to live like christians, and as becometh those who expect to be saved by *Christ*. But you can never live as they must do, whom *Christ* will save nor by consequence be saved by him, unless you repent and believe in him. Neither have you any ground in the world to think you repent and believe in him, unless your affections be where he is; which notwithstanding they can never be, so long as they are entangled amongst the sensual and earthly objects here below.

Now for the better understanding what is here commanded, I shall first explain the words themselves, and then the duties enjoined in them.

First, For the things which are here called *τὰ ἄνω*, *things above*. Some things may be said to be above, in respect of nature, other things in respect of the earth. But here by the *things above*, we are plainly to understand, things above earth, in that they are here opposed to things upon the earth: and therefore, the *things above* here, are such things as are of an higher nature, and more noble principles, than to derive their descent from any thing here below. And so we are commanded here to set our affections only upon those pleasures that are above, those honours that are above, those riches that are above, those friends and relations that are above, that *God*, that *Christ*, that all that is above.

THEN by the things upon the earth, we are here to understand such things as are conceived in the womb of the earth, and know no higher extract than dust and ashes; of this sort are all your carnal pleasures, your earthly riches, your popular applause; all which the apostle comprehends under *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life*, 1 John ii. 16. *The lust of the flesh*, that is, only luxury or carnal pleasures, which only tickle and delight the flesh. *The lust of the eye*, that is, earthly riches which can only flatter and please the eye. And *the pride of life*, that is, vain glory, which indeed is but a mere vapour, a shadow, a little froth, a very nothing; yet it is that which puffs up poor vain and silly mortals, and therefore it is called *the pride of life*. And it is very observable, that these were the three baits wherewith satan caught our first parents, and plucked them out of that ocean of happiness wherein they were created, Gen. iii. 6. First, he proposed the fruit as good for food; there was the lust of the flesh: then as pleasant to the eye; there was the lust of the eye: and then as a fruit to be desired, to make men wise; there was the pride of life. These therefore being the weapons wherewith the devil prevailed over our first parents, it is

no wonder that he useth them so frequently and effectually against us: but we need not fear, if we can but perform this one duty, even not to set our affections upon them.

THE word in the original is *ὑπονοεῖτε*, which, as to its notation and common use, hath respect both to the understanding and will: as it respects the understanding, it denotes that our thoughts should not run upon the things upon earth, but that our meditations be always fixed upon those things that are in heaven. But, as the word hath reference to the will, it implies the several motions of the will, which we call affections; and so we are here commanded, not only not to mind, but also not to love, not to desire, not to hope on, not to rejoyce in the things which are here below, but only in those things which are above. So as although we are in the world, and converse with the things of it, yet we are not to concern ourselves about them, any further than to do our duty in the station wherein God hath set us, and prepare ourselves as well as we can, for our going into the other world, our hearts hanging loose and indifferent as to all things here below, being fixt only upon God, and those glories that are above.

THIS being the proper meaning of the words, our next work must be to shew the reasonableness of the duties here enjoyned. But seeing it is in vain to speak of setting your affections on things above, until they are first taken off from the things upon the earth, I shall first endeavour to shew, what little reason you have to trouble your heads so much about the things which are here below, or to set your affections upon them. And speaking not only to rational creatures, but, as I hope, to believing christians, I hope you will so seriously weigh and consider the force of the arguments which I shall produce, as to resolve by the blessing of God for the future, not to suffer your affections to lie groveling amongst such low and pitiful things, as all things upon earth are in themselves, but much more in comparison of what you all expect in heaven.

First, THEREFORE, let me desire you to bethink yourselves of whatsoever it is that you have or desire upon earth, and consider whether it be not altogether below you, and unsuitable to you, both as men and christians; for so at present I'll suppose you all to be. But are you christians! then let me tell you, you are sons and daughters of the eternal God, the only monarch of the whole world, and so are heirs-apparent to the crown of glory. Tell me then, what an unseemly sight would it be to see a prince doting upon a beggar, and robes enamour'd with rags? How much more unseemly is it for you, who have nothing less than heaven entailed upon you, to lie doting upon the beggarly vanities of this lower world? which certainly all true christians should look upon as below their concern, carrying themselves as becometh those who expect e'er long to solace themselves in the enjoyment of God himself. While *David* look'd to his father's sheep, he carried himself as a shepherd; but when he had mounted the throne, majestically presently sat in his brows, and he behaved himself like a king. So you, although whilst you lived in your sins, and so were strangers unto God, you then lived like earthly creatures, conversing with nothing but dust and clay; yet now that you profess to have repented, and to believe in Christ, and so to be entitled to the kingdom of heaven, you should live like yourselves, and scorn to stoop so low as to lick up the serpent's food; deporting yourselves as those who every moment look to be sent for, to go and take possession of your celestial crown. The very thoughts whereof should make you disdain the highest enjoyments that this world is able to afford you, as things not worthy to be compared with the glory that Christ hath procured for you. So that, let me tell you, so long as your thoughts and affections are taken up with any thing upon earth, you act below yourselves, and unsuitable to your profession. For tell me seriously, you that expect e'er-long to bathe yourselves in those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore, can it become you to drown yourselves in a deluge of carnal pleasures and sensual delights? You that have such a plenty of bread, and heavenly manna in your father's house, is it not below you to feed like the prodigal upon husks, with the swine of this world? You that hope e'er-long to trample upon the moon, and to be advanced above the stars themselves, is it fitting for you to lie under a clod of earth? In a word: you that expect e'er-long to be invested with all the bliss and happiness that a creature is capable of, is it a comely thing for you in the mean while to spend your time

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in running after shadows, and in playing with childish gew-gaws? in raking in the dirt, or treading in the mire? Is this proper work for the heirs of heaven to be employed in? or is this to *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called*? No surely, and therefore, so long as you suffer your affections to be bent upon the things below, you act below yourselves as men, much more as christians.

HENCE, in the next place, the things upon earth being thus below you, they can never satisfy your desires; for nothing can do that, but what is better than yourselves. Whereas all things here below are so far below you, that they deserve not to be regarded at all by you: and therefore, although you may have too much of them, you can never have enough of them; never so much as to satisfy your souls, and make you happy. *Job* compares this world to a cloud, *Job*. xxx. 15. the psalmist compares it to wind, *Psal.* lxxviii. 39. and the prophet to smoke, *Hos.* xiii. 3. And who was ever yet satisfied with clouds, with wind, with smoke? but these things have something of reality in them, and therefore, you may think to wring something of satisfaction from them; but who could ever yet be satisfied with nothing? but riches are nothing, as *Solomon* himself witnesseth, saying, *wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings*, *Prov.* xxiii. 5. and a greater than *Solomon*, even *Christ* himself, saying, *whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that which he seemeth to have*, *Luke* viii. 18. or that which he thinketh he hath. For the things of this world have no other existence but in our thoughts and fancies: abstract but the imagination, and they presently vanish and disappear; so that you may easily wink the greatest beauty into blackness and deformity, earth's greatest light into darkness and obscurity. Think gold dirt, and it is so: think the pomp and grandeur of this transient world vanity, and it is so: and can such things, or rather nothings, which have no other existence, but only in the roving fancies of deluded mortals; can they, I say, ever satisfy an immortal soul? No, certainly; although it should please almighty God to give any one of you, not only one, but all the crowns and scepters, all the kingdoms and empires of this world, you would be as far from being satisfied as you are or can be now; yea, and farther too: for the more you had, the more you would desire; so that you can never rest contented, or fully satisfied, but only in the enjoyment of him that is the center of all perfections. And seeing all things upon earth, can never afford any satisfaction to you, what reason have you to set your affections upon them.

ESPECIALLY considering that they are not only vain and unsatisfying, but troublesome and disquieting too. They are not only vanity, yea, *vanity of vanities*, but they are *vexation of spirit also*. For you cannot but all be sensible what cares you underwent to get, and what fears you are still in, to keep what you have got; so that trouble and vexation attend both the getting and preserving all earthly enjoyments. You have an expression in *Job*, *hast thou entered into the treasures of snow*, *Job* xxxviii. 22. what is here meant by treasures of snow? *St. Gregory* tells you, the treasures of snow are *worldly riches*, which men take a great deal of care and pains to gather together, as children do snow, with no small hazard of their lives; and having rolled it together into heaps, and fashioned them into the shapes of horses, or giants, and towers, they begin to fancy use, and power, and safety in them: but whilst they are mightily applauding and pleasing themselves in what they have gotten, there comes a shower and washeth it all away, leaving nothing in the room of it but dirt and mire. And this is all they get for what they have done, even to be vexed and troubled for the loss of what they had got. I need not apply it, none of you but may do that yourselves from your own experience; which I am confident cannot but have taught you all, that there is more trouble and vexation, than of happiness and satisfaction in all things here below; and therefore you must needs conclude them unworthy of your affections.

BUT if there was any thing of usefulness in them to countervail the trouble you undergo for them, something might be said in excuse of your so eager pursuit of them: but, alas! they are altogether as impertinent and unnecessary, as they are troublesome and vexatious. First, they are unnecessary as to the making you truly happy. For happiness is a jewel that never yet was, nor ever will be found in the earth's bowels: as *Job* saith of wisdom, *the depth saith, it is not in me; and the earth saith, it is not in me*, *Job* xxviii. 14. So we may say of hap-

pinels: go to your wealth, and ask that for happiness, and it will say, *it is not in me*: go to your carnal pleasure, and ask that for happiness, and that will say, *it is not in me*: go to all things that you have, or can desire on earth, and ask them for happiness, and they will all answer you with one accord, *it is not in us*. Nay, the things of this world are so far from making us happy, that we can never be completely happy, until we leave them. For where can you expect to be happy, but in heaven: but in heaven, although you will have glory in its lustre, happiness in its perfection, yet not one dram of any earthly enjoyment. There is infinite light, and yet neither sun nor moon; there are glorious robes, and yet neither silks nor sattins; there are rivers of pleasures, and yet neither wine nor water; there are most delicate banquets, feasts of fat things, and yet neither meat nor drink; there are large possessions, and yet neither house nor land; there is most ravishing beauty, and yet neither red nor white; there are rich treasures indeed, and yet neither gold nor silver. In one word; there is all of heaven, and yet nothing at all of earth. So little of happiness is couched under this clod of earth, that it keeps us from it, rather than helps us to it.

AND then as the things on earth cannot make us happy themselves, so neither can they conduce to our being made so. For who ever yet could swim to heaven in a deluge of carnal pleasures, or was blown thither by the breath of popular air? who did you ever hear of, that purchased an inheritance in the land of *Canaan*, out of his revenues in this wilderness? or transported his goods from this city into that which is above, so as to exchange them there for crowns of glory, and scepters of eternal righteousness? if this was feasible, then I should not wonder that men are so eager for the world, so covetous for the greatness of it. But do not deceive yourselves, you are never the nearer heaven for standing higher upon earth; nor in more likelihood to be rich to eternity, because you are so in time. I confess, if you have ten talents, and improve them all well, you shall be made rulers over ten cities. If you have much here below, and lay it all out for your master's use, for the glory of God, a richer crown of glory will be set upon your heads. But observe and remember it, it is your using, not your having of this world's goods that will enhance your glory; but your having without using them, will but encrease your misery and torment. And seeing it is so hard to use them aright, you have but little cause to be so desirous of them; especially considering that our saviour himself, by whom alone it is possible for us to come to heaven, saith in express terms, that *a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xix. 23, 24, 25. and *with men*, saith he, *this is impossible, but with God all things are possible*, ver. 26. whereby he intimates to us, that nothing less than the extraordinary and infinite power of God, can enable a rich man to carry himself, and improve his estate so, as ever to come to heaven, by reason of the strong temptations which they are continually subject to. Or howsoever this be, sure, our saviour in these words suggests to us, that it is more difficult for a rich man than for a poor man to get to heaven; and by consequence that his riches are no furtherance, but rather an hindrance, in his way thither: which, did you but seriously consider, methinks you should rather fear than desire wealth; and be so far from setting your affections upon the things upon earth, as to make them the object of your hatred and detestation.

IN the last place, consider how fleeting and unconstant the things of this world always were, still are, and ever will be to the end of the world. You heard even now what they are compared to by God himself, even to wind, to smoke and clouds; and tell me, what sooner vanisheth than smoke? what is sooner scattered than a cloud? and what is more unconstant than the wind? All ages have afforded you instances of this kind, even of the instability and uncertainty of all things here below, 2 Sam. xix. 43. chap. xx. 1. First, *David* was mounted up to the highest pinnacle of honour, the *Israelites* crying out, *we have ten parts in the king*: but in the very next verse, the wind was turned into another quarter; for *Sheba* did but blow a trumpet, and they presently cry out, *we have no part in David*: thus he was cried up and down with the same breath. Thus whilst *Belshazzar* was gulping down his frolick cups, and taking his fill of earthly pleasures, there appears but an hand-writing upon the wall, and the man presently falls a trembling. Thus *Herod* comes out in all his pomp,

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and sits upon his throne in all his glory, and God sends but a company of silly worms, and they destroy his highness and honour too, *Acts* xii. 23. Thus methinks I see the rich man in the gospel stirring up his pillow, and composing himself to rest; methinks I hear him singing his pleasing *requiem* to his soul; *soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years*: but before he was warm in, his bed, or his song well ended, behold, there comes a voice from heaven, saying, *thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee*, *Luke* xii. 19, 20. but I need not have gone so far for instances of this nature; but I dare appeal to your own knowledge and experience in this case; there being none of you but have frequently already, and may still hear each day of such examples as these are. From whence you cannot but conclude, the world, and all the glory of it, to be but a mere piece of pageantry, that is still passing away from one to another, and presently is out of sight. All things upon earth being in continual motion, constant in nothing but inconstancy.

Now put these things together, and seriously consider with yourselves how mean and base, how vain and empty, how troublesome and vexatious, how impertinent and unnecessary, how fleeting and unconstant all things upon earth are, and then tell me, whether you really think them worthy of your affections? or that it is worth your while to spend your time in the eager prosecution of them? I know, if you will but consult your severer judgments, you cannot but look upon all things here below as beneath you to look upon; as things that deserve not your serious thoughts, much less your time and strength to be spent upon them. And therefore, I hope I need not use any more arguments to persuade you to call in for your affections from all things here below: however, give me leave to mind you of the apostle's saying, that *covetousness is idolatry*, *Colos.* iii. 5. and that *whoever minds earthly things, is a shame to the gospel, and an enemy to the cross of Christ*, *Phil.* iii. 18, 19. and by consequence in setting your affections upon them, you thwart God's intentions in giving of them; who gave them not but that you should improve them for his glory. And therefore have a care lest your table become a snare, and your earthly wealth an occasion of your eternal ruine. Have a care lest in catching at the shadow, you lose the substance, and exchange your future happiness for present misery. And for that end, be sure to *set your affections on things above, and not on things upon the earth*.

BUT it is not enough that your affections be not upon the things that are upon earth, unless they be upon those things that are in heaven. And therefore it is this which the apostle puts here in the first place, the other signifying nothing without this: for as it avails us nothing to take off our affection from some things here below, unless we take them off from all; so neither will it avail us any thing though we take off our affections from all things here below, unless we set them all upon those things that are above. But this is one of the hardest tasks that a christian hath to do; but it is that which, unless a man doth do, he is no christian: this being the specifical difference betwixt a christian and another man, that the one lives by sense, and not by faith; the other by faith, and not by sense: and therefore, the one minds earth only, and not heaven; the other minds heaven only, and not earth. And therefore, if you desire not to play with religion as the generality of people do, but to be christians indeed, real saints, such as Christ will accept of, when you come into another world, then you must resolve without any more ado, not only to leave doting upon the things which are below, but to perform the whole that is here enjoined, even to *set your affections upon things above, as well as not on things on earth*.

FOR the opening whereof, we shall first consider the reasons why our affections should be in heaven? and then what affections should be there.

First, WHY should our affections be upon those things that are above? All the reason in the world for it; because there is nothing made or designed as a proper object for your affections, but only the things that are in heaven: especially if you look upon yourselves as christians, you must needs grant that heaven is the only place where your thoughts and affections should always dwell: for where should your affections be but where your relations are? and your hearts, but where your treasure is? But are you christians? then,

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First, YOUR relations are such as are in heaven: there is your father that begat you to a new life, and continually provideth for you: there is that *Hierusalem that is above*, which is the mother of us all, Gal. iv. 26. there are all our brethren, the saints of the living God; yea, our elder brother himself, even Jesus Christ, who is called *the first-born among many brethren*, Rom. viii. 29. for thither it was that he ascended when he left these lower regions of the world. *I ascend*, saith he, *to my father and your father; to my God and your God*, John xx. 17. there he hath been ever since, and still is preparing a place for us, as he did for them which are already with him: there are the antient patriarchs, prophets and apostles: there are all the martyrs and saints of God, even all that ever lived and died in the faith of Christ, they are now in heaven with one heart and voice, singing forth the praises of the most high God, and of the lamb that sitteth upon the throne for evermore. And amongst the rest, thou mayst have a father or mother, an husband or wife, a son or a daughter, or some very near of kin unto thee, now divested of those other relations, and having taken upon them that of brotherhood. These and ten thousand times ten thousand more are now in heaven, there solacing themselves in the enjoyment of the chiefest good, whilst we their younger brethren, not being yet fully come to age, are still in this lower world, grappling with its lusts, and striving against the temptations of it. But howsoever, though our father which is in heaven doth not yet see good to admit us into that blessed society of the spirits of just men made perfect, not being as yet fitted and qualified sufficiently for it; yet it is his will and pleasure that our hearts be amongst them, although our persons cannot; and that we still be thinking of them, and longing to come unto them, and to be made partakers with them of their celestial glories. In short; our affections should be with them in heaven, even whilst our bodies are upon the earth, so as to be every moment preparing ourselves for that blessed time, when we shall bid adieu to all things upon earth, and go up to take possession of our inheritance in heaven.

Secondly, As you are christians, not only your relations but your possessions too are only in heaven; neither is there any thing upon earth that is worth the owning in itself, much less in comparison of what is reserved for you in heaven. But here, I hope, I need not spend much time in shewing you, that a christian's treasure is only in heaven; for, are you christians, and yet look for your treasures here? Do you think that the heirs of God, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, have their portion only in this life? or that Christ came from heaven only that you might live pleasantly upon earth? and was reproached and despised only that you might be honoured and applauded by men? I dare say there is none of you hath such mean thoughts of Christ as these are, expecting nothing less than true, real, solid and eternal happiness from him. I know also you would not willingly have your portion in this life; but whatsoever your present estates are, you desire better and greater in the world to come, even the same which Christ hath purchased with his own most precious blood; and which our brethren that are gone before, are already invested with in the highest heavens, where they behold God face to face, and enjoy all those infinite and enamouring perfections which are concentered in him, which God intended at first as the only object of our felicity. And if these do not, what can deserve your affections from you?

AND so I come to the next thing proposed, and that is, what are those affections which we ought to set upon the things that are above. For the understanding of which, give me leave to call to your minds the extent and latitude of the word *ὑποτάσσειν* here used in my text, which, as I told you, hath respect to both the chief faculties of the soul, the understanding and the will. And so when we are commanded to *set our affections on things above*, it is not to be understood only of the acts of the understanding, which we call consideration, meditation, and the like, but likewise of the several motions of the will, which come under the name of passions or affections. Now there being a double object for the will of man to work upon, good and evil, there is likewise a double faculty considerable in it; the one we call a concupiscible, the other an irascible faculty; by the one we follow that which is good, by the other we run from that which is evil: now there being nothing above of evil, there is nothing there for our irascible passions to do, or work upon: and so grief, hatred, fear, and such like

like passions or affections, are excluded from the number of those, which we ought to set upon things above. But good being there in its beauty and perfection, the other affections, whereby the will embraceth what is good, are chiefly to be exercised, and in the highest pitch and degree that they can possibly be raised to. Now the first act, which the will puts forth to that which is presented to it under the notion of good, is that affection which we commonly call *love*; which is indeed the fountain of all the other affections, and streams itself into them, according to the several circumstances which the object may lie under. As for example; if what we apprehend to be good be present with us, then affection of love embraceth it with joy; if absent from us, it issues forth itself into desire: but if the distance be still greater, yet so that it is attainable, it puts forth itself into hope. Which things being thus premised, it is easy to shew what affections are to be placed upon *those things that are above*.

For, *First*, if we consider the word as it respects the understanding, so it imports, that our thoughts and meditations are principally to be taken up with the affairs of the world to come, and with those transcendent glories which are above: so that your most serious thoughts are still to be spent upon those most serious things. Thus *David* describes a good man by his *delighting in the law of the Lord, and meditating in that law both day and night*, Psal. i. 2. implying, that his great care is how to get to heaven. And therefore, whilst others are busying themselves about the impertinences of this transient life, the soul that is truly pious, employs its thoughts and studies about the happiness of heaven, and the way that leads unto it; his body may be with his friends below, but his head and his heart are with his God above. And if any of you desire to manifest yourselves to be christians indeed, you must not look at, or mind the things that are seen, but those things that are not seen; as knowing that *the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*, 2 Cor. iv. 18. You must not suffer your thoughts to creep any longer upon this dunghil earth, but refine your drossy, and raise up your drowsy spirits to behold, contemplate, and admire the glories that are in heaven: for which end it is necessary that you often retire from the cares and bustles of this tumultuous world, and bid your earthly thoughts farewell, commanding them to stay below, while your aspiring souls go up to take a view of what is above; where having fixed yourselves among the choir of saints and angels, cast your rolling eyes about, and take an exact survey of the land of *Canaan* that flows with milk and honey. Look well that you cannot but behold such transcendent light and glory, that your eyes will be dazzled, and your hearts astonished at it. And if you do but listen with an attentive and believing ear, you cannot but hear such melodious musick, and celestial concert, as will be sure to ravish and transport your spirits beyond themselves. And do but rightly weigh and consider what is there, and you will find that there is not only the blessed company of the spirits of just men made perfect, together with angels, archangels, cherubims, and seraphims, with the rest of the celestial hierarchy, but there is Christ and God himself; whom to know, is the only wisdom; whom to serve, is the only freedom; and whom to enjoy, is the only happiness that any creature is capable of. And who would not dwell in the ravishing contemplations of such rare perfections as these?

In the next place, when your heads are thus got into heaven amongst those things that are above, you must be sure to send your hearts after them. I mean the affection of love, which cannot but be inflamed with beholding such transcendent beauty and glory as that is. And therefore do but seriously bethink and consider with yourselves what really there is, and you cannot but love to be in heaven: there is the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the cause of all causes, the best of all goods, and the center of all perfections: there is wisdom and power, justice and mercy, grace and goodness, love and purity, glory and eternity altogether: there is he that made you, he that preserveth you, and he that redeemed you too: there is he that left the sweetness of his father's bosom, and all to come and die for you: there is he that laid down his own life to ransom yours, and died in time that you might live for ever: there is he that gave his body to be broken that you might eat it, and his blood to be shed that you might mystically drink of it: there is he that mourned, that you might rejoice; and became miserable to make you happy: there is he that easeth you of all your dolorous complaints, and cures you of all your mournful sadness;

that supplies your wants, dispels your fears, and averts your danger from the wrath of an incensed God. In short, there is Christ now making intercession for your souls in heaven, as he once made satisfaction for your sins on earth. And whilst I am speaking, and you thinking, I hope, upon these things, do not your hearts wax hot within you? while you are thus musing, doth not the fire kindle? are not your hearts even snatched from you, and your souls transported into flames of love? certainly if they be not, it is because they are not in heaven, and you do not rightly consider what is there; which I am confident none can do, but he must needs be in love with what he there beholds; these things being the only objects which our love was made to be placed upon.

IN the next place, having your affection of love fixed upon those glories that are above, I need not tell you, that your desires must be carried after them. For as you cannot behold them without loving, so you cannot love them without desiring of them; they being so infinitely lovely in themselves, and yet for the present at some distance from us, which should make us long and thirst after nothing in the world so much, as to come nearer and nearer to them, until at length we come into the full enjoyment of them. For if the dark glympses, and transient glances of heaven's glory be so strangely ravishing, what will the clear vision be? if the very believing of it fills us, as the apostle saith, *with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, what shall we think of the full possession of it? even that it is infinitely more than we are able to think of. The consideration whereof should make us, methinks, even forget the world and all things in it, and desire nothing but to get to heaven. Thus St. Paul, when he had been wrapt up into the third heaven, and had heard and seen something of what is there done, what was his life after, but a continued breathing out, *cupio dissolvi, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*. Thus David, having once tasted a little of *those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore*, how pathetically doth he after cry out, *as the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God*, Psal. xlii. 1, 2. And you, and I, who are so apt to be overwhelmed with cares and fears, and always subject to sin and vanity, could we but now and then in our aspiring and believing thoughts get up to heaven, and there contemplate those eternal mansions, which Christ himself hath purchased, and is now preparing for us, we should soon be weary of this deceitful world, and desire to be taken from it: we should soon join with the sweet singer of Israel, and say, *Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then I would fly away, and be at rest*; then would I mount above the stars themselves, and there my soul should rest, and take its fill of joy and pleasure in the enjoyment of the chiefest good. And verily, until your desires be in some measure thus carried after the joys of heaven, you are not only far from performing the duty in my text, but you are as yet far from true piety and religion: which cannot consist without real and sincere desires of serving God on earth, and enjoying him in heaven.

BUT you may say, heaven is a great way off, and you know not how long it may be before you can get to it; and therefore what need we trouble ourselves so much about it yet? To that I answer, it is true indeed, heaven is a great way off from you that dwell on earth: but howsoever, although it be above your sight, it is not above your hope. And therefore, in the next place, that affection of hope should fix itself in heaven, even whilst we are on earth; which is the only time wherein we can exert this grace. For when we come to heaven, as our faith will be turned into vision, so will our hope be swallowed up of fruition, Rom. viii. 24. And indeed, as there is nothing so worthy of our love, so neither is there any thing that we have such grounds to hope for, as the things that are above: for we have no ground to hope for any thing here below, because we have no promise for it. But that all those that repent and believe the gospel shall go to heaven, we have the infallible word and promise of God, *who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. And what ground can we have in the world whereon to anchor our hopes firmer, or so firm, as this is? And therefore, we have no cause to despond or despair

spair of it. Let us but repent of our former sins, and for the future fear God and keep his commandments, believing in Jesus Christ for the acceptance both of our persons and duties, and then we cannot miss of the glories which we have now been speaking of. And therefore, whilst some hope for riches, others for the honours of this world, whilst some hope to live pleasantly, others to live long upon earth, let us hope, in and through Christ, to live eternally in heaven, yea, so as to *rejoyce in the hope of the glory of God*, Rom. v. 2.

AND so I come to the last affection which is to be set upon the things above, even our joy, which you must not suffer to be crawling upon earth, whilst the others are soaring aloft in heaven; where, and where alone, the proper objects of our joy are: but supposing, your other affections to be placed upon those things that are above, it is impossible for you not to rejoyce in them; yea, the very thoughts of your having such transcendent glory purchased and prepared for you, cannot but be extraordinary pleasing and delightful to you. And although you have not as yet, nor can see them, but as *through a glass darkly*, yet *believing in them, you cannot but rejoyce with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. nay, more than that, the self-same joy which the angels have and you expect in heaven, the same you are bound in duty to solace yourselves in whilst you are here below: for whom do the angels and glorified saints rejoyce in but only in the living God? in whom you are commaunded to rejoyce here as well as there; *rejoyce in the Lord always, and again I say rejoyce*, Phil. iv. 4. so that we are bound to rejoyce in the lord always, when we have and when we have not any thing else to rejoyce in; so as always to say with the prophet, *although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation*, Hab. iii. 17, 18. And so we may say moreover, although all things upon earth do frown upon me, and my very friends be turned against me, although my estate fail me, and all my honours be taken from me, although my health and strength decay, and I have nothing in this world to help me, yet will I rejoyce in the Lord, and solace myself, and comfort my heart with the believing thoughts of that eternal happiness, which e'er long shall be conferred upon me.

THUS having shewn you how you ought to set your affections upon those things that are above, so as always to be thinking of them, with love unto them, thirsting after them, hoping for them, and rejoicing in them; I should now come to apply what I have said, but that I hope you have done it to my hands; being now so thoroughly persuaded of the excellency of those things that are above, beyond whatsoever is here below, that you are already resolved within yourselves, to call in all your scattered affections from all things here below, wherein they have hitherto been entangled, and to center them all in heaven, and in that perfection of glory and happiness, which is there, and only there to be enjoyed. Which if you were truly resolved upon, and by the assistance of God would perform such resolutions, what holy lives would you then lead, and what happy creatures would you then be? the world would then be no snare unto you, nor its pomps and vanities entice you to sin: for your eyes would be so much dazled with beholding the glory of heaven, that every thing else would seem but blackness and darkness to you. The pleasures of this world would soon seem brutish, its honours despicable, and its riches so poor and mean, that they deserve to be the object rather of our scorn than covetousness: and so disdaining to be so low-spirited, as to mind or regard such childish trifles, and throw away our precious and short-liv'd days upon such impertinent and tormenting vanities, as all things are which are here below, we should rather devote ourselves to serving God, and please ourselves in pleasing him.

AND as this would be the way to become holy, so would it lead us to be happy too; not only because grace and glory, holiness and happiness attend each other, but likewise in that our very happiness itself consists in the performing this one duty, even in setting our affections upon things above, and not on those things which are upon the earth. For all the misery and trouble

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that befalls us here, ariseth only from our affections being placed here. For if you did not love and desire the world, you would neither be proud that you have it, nor sorry when you lose it; your hearts not being set upon it, they would not be troubled for parting with it.

AND therefore, let things fall how they will, your love and joy being only in heaven, nothing upon earth can deprive you of it. Wherefore, as ever any of you desire to know what it is to be free from misery, or to be truly happy, set upon the performance of this duty; *set your affections on things above, and not on things upon the earth.* Which could we all do, what happy souls should we then be? how should we laugh to see poor silly mortals trudging up and down the world, encompassing both sea and land to search for happiness, and cannot find it; whilst we enjoy it in our own breasts, by having our affections placed upon God, and the things above. And whilst others trouble and torment themselves with needless fears and jealousies about future events, our hearts would be fixed, trusting in the Lord: whatsoever storms and tempests arise without us, there would still be calmness and tranquility within; whatsoever happens in the world, to the grief and trouble of them that love it, would not touch or reach us, whose minds, whose thoughts, whose hearts, whose affections are all above it. By this means we should live in heaven whilst we are on earth, maugre all the opposition that men or devils can make against us. And it is not long but where our hearts now are, our souls shall be, even in the highest heavens, rejoicing in the enjoyment of the chiefest good, and singing forth his praises for evermore.

SERMON CXXXVIII.

Of keeping our Hearts.

PROV. iv. 23.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

AS it is with the slaves in *Turkey*, and elsewhere, if they beget any children, they are born subject to the same slavery and bondage that their parents live in; so is it with all mankind. Our first parents being overcome and carried captive by the Devil, and sold under sin; all their posterity are born slaves and captives to sin and *Satan*: to sin that reigns and domineers over them, so that all the faculties of their souls, and members of their bodies, are in perpetual bondage and subjection thereto; what that bids them think, or speak, or do, that they readily perform, without so much as resisting or opposing its commands: and if they be servants to sin, they cannot but be so to *Satan* too: being taken captive by him at his will, 2 *Tim.* ii. 26. This being the sad and wretched estate of all mankind by nature, the son of God himself, out of his infinite love and compassion towards us, was pleased to lay down his own life, to ransom and redeem us from this spiritual thralldom and slavery. And he hath paid so great and acceptable a price for our release and freedom, that every

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one, that is willing and desirous to have it, may most certainly attain unto it. It is true, if a man hath that love and affection for his sins, that he had rather continue in their service, then to be freed from it, such a one deserves to have his ear bored through, so as to remain a slave for ever: as it was ordained in the law of *Moses*, concerning servants, *Exod. xxi. 6.* so here; the coming of Christ is as the year of release, wherein God is pleased to proclaim liberty to captive sinners, *Isa. lxi. 1, 2.* Now they that prefer their chains before their liberty, are justly condemned to perpetual drudgery: but such as being weary of the service of sin, and desiring to be released from it, betake themselves to Christ, and accept of the terms that he hath propounded for their releasement, such he will surely give rest and freedom to, *Matt. xi. 28.* and *if the son make them free, they shall be free indeed,* *John viii. 36.* that is, they shall be really freed from the power and tyranny of sin, so that it shall not any longer have dominion over them, *because they are not under the law, but under grace,* *Rom. vi. 14.* it shall not reign any longer in their mortal bodies, *that they should obey it in the lusts thereof,* *Rom. vi. 12.*

Now our blessed saviour having at so dear a rate procured this releasement for us; so that, if it be not our own faults, we may all be actually possessed of it, it must needs be our interest and concern to mind it, and to use all means necessary to the actual enjoyment of it. And therefore, he having already purchased it for us, and being still both willing and ready to assist us in the prosecution of it, it must be our principal care and study to weaken the power and dominion of sin in us, and for that end to avoid, as much as we can, the actual commission of all sin, still trusting in, and depending upon Christ, for his assistance of us in so good and acceptable a work as this is. Which, if we do, we cannot question but he will be always ready to aid and assist us, by the influence of his grace and spirit. So that although we cannot do it effectually, by our own strength, yet if we do but what we can ourselves, he will be sure to enable us to live like saints indeed; so as not to indulge, or allow ourselves in any one sin whatsoever, nor do any thing wilfully which we know to be offensive and displeasing unto God.

WELL then, seeing Christ hath done so great things for us, that now there is none of us but by his assistance may mortify and subdue the strongest sin or corruption that hitherto hath reigned in us, so as for the future not to obey it in the lusts thereof; let us therefore, in his name, set ourselves in good earnest against our sins, and resolve to use all means imaginable to keep them under, that so, while others content themselves with professing the name of Christ, we may be christians or saints in deed and truth, and manifest ourselves to be so both to God, to men, and our own consciences, by conforming our lives and actions wholly to the laws and commands of God.

FOR which end I know nothing more necessary to be observed than what the wise man prescribes in the words I have now read, *keep thy heart, &c.* for could you but do this, even keep your hearts aright, you would soon restrain the prevalency of sin, and alter the whole course of your life and conversation for the better, so as to keep yourselves unspotted from the world, and free from the wilful commission of any known sin, as I shall shew in the sequel of this discourse.

IN order whereunto, I desire you to observe, that these words do naturally divide themselves into two parts; here is the wise man's counsel or advice, and then the reason of it: his counsel is, to *keep thy heart with all diligence*; and the reason is, *for out of it are the issues of life.*

THE first part contains not only wholesome, but very necessary advice, which every holy and good man cannot but observe; for, without observing of this, he cannot be a holy and good man: for he that doth not diligently keep his own heart, can neither be secure from falling into gross sins, nor yet be fitted for the due performance of any holy duty: so that this advice is not given only to some particular person, or persons, in the world; but all men, of whatsoever rank, or age, or temper, or condition, they be, are equally concerned to receive and follow this counsel, even to *keep their hearts with all diligence*; which notwithstanding, no man can do, unless he first knows what it is to do so. And therefore, I shall endeavour to unfold unto you the true meaning and purport of this divine counsel or admonition, as clearly as I can. And

for that end shall search into the true notion and sense of each expression in it. Considering.

1st. The subject, *the heart*.

2^{dly}. The act, *keep thy heart*.

3^{dly}. The manner of doing it, *with all diligence*.

THE *first* thing to be considered is the subject, *the heart*; which sometimes in scripture is put for the material heart, the seat of natural life, the *primum vivens*, and *ultimum moriens*: yet it is more usually put for the immaterial and spiritual part of man, even his soul; which though philosophers generally assert it to reside principally in the head, the scriptures make the heart to be the chief seat of it, where it exercises its power, and exerts its several operations: and therefore the heart in scripture is used for all the faculties of the soul; for the understanding, *Gen. vi. 5.* for the memory, *Luke ii. 15.* for the conscience, *1 Sam. xxiv. 5.* *1 John iii. 20.* for the will and affections, as *Acts xvi. 14.* *the Lord opened her heart*; that is, moved her will, and enclined her affections to embrace the truth she heard. And as the heart in scripture dialect thus sometimes signifies one, sometimes another faculty or operation of the soul; so is it frequently put for the whole soul, and for all its powers and faculties together, *Matt. xii. 35.* *Prov. xxiii. 26.* And so it is to be understood in my text, of the mind, the thoughts, the conscience, the will, and all the several motions and affections of the soul, whereof the heart is the chiefest seat or chamber where they reside: or, if you will, the shop where they are framed, and fashioned by the soul. And therefore this advice of the wiseman, *to keep our hearts*, intimates to us, that we are not to look only to the outward actions of our lives, to varnish and adorn them with the specious shews of piety and religion. Though this be all that the ordinary professors of religion do; who take a great care to avoid all gross and scandalous crimes, or at least so to hide and palliate them, that the world may take no notice of them; but in the mean while indulge themselves in any secret and heart sins, as covetousness, envy, malice, uncharitableness, hypocrisy, mistrust of God, and the like; as if such as these are, were not altogether as dangerous and damnable, as the most atrocious and horrid vices that the most debauched person in the world can be guilty of. This therefore is that which the wiseman here would have us to beware of, even to look to our inward, as well as our outward man; not only to keep our hands from picking and stealing, and our tongues from lying and swearing; not only to keep the members of our bodies from the actual commission of any known sin, but to keep our hearts too, and all the faculties of our souls, in the proper frame and disposition which they ought to be always in.

AND that is the *second* thing to be here considered, the act to be exerted upon this subject; *keep thy heart*: but the heart signifying, as I have shewn, the whole inner manner, the keeping of the heart cannot possibly signify any thing else, but the preserving the several faculties and inward motions also of the soul in their due order, so as to correspond with the rules laid down for them in the holy scripture.

IN order therefore to your right understanding what it is to keep your hearts, I shall shew you, by peace-meal, how you ought to keep every thing that is in them.

First, THEREFORE, for your thoughts: the first and most immediate acts of the soul, them you must be sure to keep steady, and fixed upon their right and proper objects, and so pure and clear in themselves. You cannot but be all sensible how nimble, how active, how busy and restless your thoughts are, continually frisking about from one object to another, and from one place to another, how far or distant soever they be asunder; sometimes wandring as far as *France*, or *Spain*, or *Turkey*, or any way where a man hath ever been, and then presently at home again, in your shops or houses; now soaring aloft in heaven, and in the twinkling of an eye, got down to earth again, there roving about from sin to sin, from one vain object to another: so it hath been all along, *Gen. vi. 5.* and so is still with all men by nature: their thoughts are not only evil,

evil, but they are nothing else but evil; and that too not only now and then, but continually, at all times, in all places, in all companies, in all employments, even sacred as well as civil: yea, commonly vain, impertinent, and sinful thoughts, are more apt to crowd themselves into mens minds in the performance of religious duties, than at other times. How many places have your thoughts been in, how many employments have they been busy about, since you came into God's presence? How justly may God complain of us, as he did of his people *Israel*, *Ezek. xxxiii. 31.* Their heart, that is, their thoughts are running upon their trades, their shops, their farms, their merchandize, their estates, and every thing they are covetous and desirous of, even upon any thing rather than the work they are about. Thus it is continually in our very approaches unto God; how much more at other times? but this must not be, if you desire to be truly holy; you must bridle your very thoughts, and keep them within their bounds, or else you are never likely either to be, or do good. Whatsoever duty you perform, you must keep your hearts and thoughts close unto it, or at least do what you can to do so, otherwise it can never be acceptable unto God. And at all other times you must watch and guard your fancy and imaginations, that they may not spend themselves upon foolish and impertinent, much less upon vicious and sinful objects: but keep them in that order and discipline, that they may march in rank and file, regularly and directly towards such things as they were at first made and designed to be fixed upon; as the perfections of God, the merits of Jesus Christ, the excellency of holiness, the sinfulness of sin, the vanity of the world, the glory of heaven, the miseries of hell, and such like objects as tend to the deterring you from vice, and the alluring of you to the exercise of grace and virtue. This is the only way to keep your hearts clean and free from worldly, lascivious, uncharitable, malicious, revengeful, proud, and ambitious thoughts, which otherwise will certainly infest and defile you. For do you what you can, your agile thoughts will be running upon something or other: and if you do not watch them narrowly, and keep them fixed upon proper and good objects, they will fly out and light upon what is sinful and mischievous.

2 dly. As you must keep your thoughts always pure and clean, so you must be sure to keep your judgments sound and orthodox. Where by your judgments I mean your settled thoughts concerning particular truths or falsehood; which is a thing that we must have an especial care of, so as not to think that to be true which is false, nor yet that false which is true: for every such thought is erroneous, and by consequence sinful. I confess an orthodox faith can never bring us to heaven, without an holy life; but so neither can an holy life do it, without an orthodox faith; for heresies are damnable, as well as sins, *2 Pet. ii. 1.* and the reason is, because heresies are as much against the assertions, as sin is against the command of God, revealed in scripture. Hence our saviour speaks of false prophets, which should teach such doctrines, and back them with such signs and wonders, as, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect, *Matt. xxiv. 24.* a place much to be observed. For it plainly shews, that there are such doctrines and opinions held and taught by some, which will certainly ruin and destroy them which believe or espouse them. For, it seems, it is impossible for the elect to be deceived with them, because if they were they could not be saved. And therefore, it is not so indifferent a thing, as some would make it, what opinion a man is of. For it seems a man may be damned for his evil opinions, as well as his evil practices; insomuch, that heresies are reckoned amongst the grossest sins, *Gal. v. 20, 21.* A necessary caution for this age, wherein there have been more errors and heresies broached by some, and swallowed down by others than in any other age since the world began: but as you tender your eternal salvation have a care of them; be not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. Have a care of new doctrines and opinions, started up in these latter days: but keep close to the articles and principles of religion established in our church; which are all grounded upon scripture, consonant to reason, and agreeable to the doctrine of the primitive christians, as may be easily demonstrated. But whatsoever is new, beware of it upon that very account because it is new, following the apostle's advice to *Timothy*, *1 Tim. vi. 20, 21.*

3dly.

3dly, KEEP your consciences void of offence towards God and man, Acts xxiv. 16. Be sure to avoid whatsoever may defile or offend these, as be sure every sin doth. For which end you must also keep your consciences always awake, that they may duly perform their office, in excusing, or else in accusing of you, according to your merit or demerit. Above all things have a care they be not galled with any heavy sin; but that their testimony may afford you matter of comfort and rejoicing, rather than of trouble and remorse, 2 Cor. i. 12.

4ly, You must keep your memories faithful and retentive of the best things, and such as are most necessary and advantageous for you; though no man can remember all things, all men can remember some things: there is no man so forgetful but he can remember his bills, his bonds, and all his concerns in this life. And these are generally the only objects that men exercise their memories about; making their memories the store-house only of their temporal affairs. But he that would keep his heart aright, must lay up better things in it, than what this world can afford him. Thus you are commanded to remember the Lord your God, Deut. xviii. 18. Eccles. xii. 1. Jer. ii. 32. and to remember his law, Mal. iv. 4. your sins, Ezek. xvi. 61, 63. and Christ, for which the sacrament of the Lord's supper is ordain'd, Luke xxii. 19. and he that doth not keep these and such like things fresh in his mind and memory, can never be said to keep his heart aright.

5thly. To the keeping of your hearts aright, it is required that you keep a strict watch over your wills, and their several motions or inclinations, which we usually call passions or affections: you must not suffer them to be entangled amongst the briars and thorns, the vexatious trifles and tormenting vanities of this lower world, but you must keep them aloft, soaring amongst the transcendent glories that are above, 1 John ii. 15. Col. iii. 2. Your love, your desire, your hope, your joy, must be all fixed only upon God the chiefest good; your hatred, your abhorrence, your grief, your anger, must be exercised only upon sin, the worst of all evils: these are the proper objects of your several passions; and therefore, as you must not love or desire any thing so much as God; so neither must you hate or abhor any thing in the world but sin. As for the things of this life, you must keep your affections in an equal poize towards them; neither too much overjoyed at the having of them, nor over-grieved at the parting with them: keeping your hearts loose and indifferent as to all things here below, fixed only upon God and the things above.

THUS, therefore, it is that you are to keep your hearts, your whole hearts in a right frame and temper; you must keep your thoughts clean and pure, your judgments sound and orthodox, your consciences clear and void of all offence, your memories stored with the best things, and your affections placed upon their proper objects.

THUS much may suffice for the art of keeping the heart. The next thing to be considered, is the manner of its performance; it is to be kept with all diligence. In the Hebrew it is מִן כָּל שִׁמְרָה, *above all keeping, keep thy heart*: have a greater care of that than of all things else. There are many things in the world that men are very careful to keep, as their money, their writings, their credit, their friends, their jewels, their liberty, their privileges, their health, their strength, their life, and the like; what care do men take to keep these things? And yet if we will take the wise man's counsel, our heart is to be kept more carefully than any of them all, yea, than all of them: for it is *to be kept with all diligence*, or above all other keeping, with the best, the safest, the surest way of keeping imaginable; so as not only to look to it now and then, but to have our eye continually upon it, and always to set a strict watch and guard about it. And verily, all things considered, we have all the reason in the world to do so.

FOR, first, the heart of man is certainly the most deceitful thing in nature, for it is *deceitful above all things*, Jer. xvii. 9. There is no person or thing in the world that puts so many tricks upon men, and cheats them so egregiously as their own hearts do. What lyes and falsehoods do they continually tell you? If you be but a little sorry for your sins, your hearts tell you this is repentance. If you do but believe that Jesus Christ is the saviour of the world, your hearts tell you, this is faith. And if you have but any thing like to grace or virtue, your hearts presently tell you, they are really so. How many have been thus cheated into everlasting flames by their own fraudulent and deceitful hearts? And therefore the wise man might well say, *he that*

that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, Prov. xxviii. 26. for you'll all acknowledge him to be a fool, with a witness, that will trust a known cheat; yet such is every man's heart by nature; such a cheat that it cannot but cheat him; it would act contrary to its own nature if it did not. And therefore it must needs concern us to look very narrowly to it, and to deal with it as we would do with a common cheat, or a treacherous, pilfering, and deceitful servant, even always to have a jealous and watchful eye over it: for if our eye be never so little off, it will do us some mischief, and betray us into some danger or other. And seeing our own hearts are so apt to deceive and impose upon us, we had need to keep a very strict hand over them; and they being deceitful above all things, above all things we must be sure to keep them.

2dly. THE heart had need be kept with all diligence, because of the many and great dangers it is encompassed with on every side; it lies in the midst of snares, wherewith it is continually subject to be entangled. As there is treachery within, so without there are many enemies that always labour to assault and batter it; especially it hath two very potent, vigilant, and indefatigable adversaries, and they are the world and the devil.

First, FOR the world; that lays close siege about it, and plants three very great and dangerous engines against it, earthly riches, carnal pleasures, and popular applause. Whereof the first, even the wealth and riches of this world, is commonly so powerful and prevalent upon mankind, that the Devil thought to have surprized our saviour himself with it; for which end he reserved it for his last assault, as thinking this would do, though nothing else would, *Matt. iv. 8, 9*. But although our saviour's heart was so rarely tempered, so perfectly inclined to God and goodness, that all the riches and glories of this world could make no impression at all upon it; it is not so with us, whose hearts are so corrupt and depraved with sin, and so inclined to the things of this world, that the very name of riches will not only entice them into evil, but rob them of whatsoever is good and commendable in them, as our saviour intimates, *Matt. xiii. 22*. Neither are the pleasures of this world less powerful and prevalent over our corrupt hearts, than its wealth and riches; insomuch that whatsoever is pleasing to the flesh, usually draws all the powers of the soul after it. Whence our saviour chargeth us to have an especial care that we be not overtaken with them, *Luke xxi. 34*. yea, so foolish and fickle a thing is the heart of man become, that it is apt to be drawn aside and aliened from God, and real happiness, with the very breath of mens mouths; every blast of popular air is strong enough to make it reel and stagger, if not fall down before it. The very empty titles of honour, which have no subsistence but what mens deluded fancies give them, even they too often puff up the heart with pride and self-conceit, and so lay it waste and destitute of every thing that is truly good. And our hearts being thus liable to be ensnared with such envenomed baits as these are, which the world continually lays before them, we had need to have the greater care to keep them with all the diligence imaginable.

ESPECIALLY considering that our old malicious and inveterate enemy, the Devil, joins his forces with the world, and wields its weapons with his cunning and powerful hand. If a single temptation will not seize upon the heart, he is always ready to second and reinforce it, using all the skill and power he hath to get possession of the heart, that he may exercise his tyranny and dominion over it: and if he cannot take it by force, he will endeavour to surprize it by fraud. So that by one means or other the heart of man is continually subject to be overcome and carried away captive by him; which it will most certainly be, unless it be kept and guarded with all the care and vigilancy that possibly can be used about it; upon which account the apostle adviseth us to watch narrowly, *1 Pet. v. 8*.

SEEING therefore the heart of man is so treacherous and deceitful in itself, and likewise so apt to be betrayed and deceived by others, even by the world and the Devil, it must needs behove us to keep it with all diligence. Especially considering, in the last place, the reason which the wise man here gives of his counsel or advice, *keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life*. I shall not trouble you with the various expositions that learned men have put upon these words; the natural and genuine sense of them is plainly this, that all the actions of a man's life issue or proceed from the heart, which is the fountain not only of our natural life, but likewise, of our moral too. So that as a man's heart is, so will his life be. If his heart be kept clean and pure, his life cannot be wicked and vicious;

and if his heart be wicked or vicious, his life cannot be kept clean and pure from sin; as our saviour himself teacheth, *Matt. vii. 16, 17. chap. vii. 34, 35.* And what our saviour there taught, is attested by reason and daily experience, even that all the actions of a man's life, good or bad, flow from his heart.

First, As for sinful actions, it is plain that they are all engendered in the heart; that is the womb that conceives and brings them forth; as the apostle describing the generation of sin, how it is accomplished *a primo ad ultimum*, he saith, *then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death,* James i. 15. Where by *lust* he means the inward pravity and corruption of our hearts by *sin*, the actual enormities of our life and conversations. The first conception whereof he ascribes to lust, to our base and corrupt hearts; here they are conceived, and from hence they are brought forth into act; as our saviour also sheweth, *Matt. xv. 19.* So that the heart is the root from whence all actual impieties spring, the fountain from whence they flow. All the sins that thou art or canst be guilty of, take their first rise from the disorder and impurity of thy affections, from whence they proceed to corrupt thy fancy and imagination, until at length they break forth into actual rebellion against God. For as the apostle argues, *from whence come wars and fightings among you, come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?* James iv. 1. The same may be said of all other actual sins whatsoever; whence comes all the pride, the couzenage, the oppression, the extortion, the blaspheming of God's name, the profaning of his sabbaths, the neglecting of his publick ordinances; whence come these and all other sins, but from your lusts, from the vitiousness and corruption of your hearts and natures? The fountain is polluted, and therefore it is no wonder that the streams are so. Your hearts are not right with God, and that is the reason that your actions are so contrary to him. Neither is it possible for you ever to reform your lives, until your hearts be first reformed. Here all your sins begin, and therefore your reformation must begin here too, or else it can never be carried on to any purpose. From whence you may see the indispensable necessity of observing the wise man's counsel *in keeping the heart with all diligence*, because otherwise all manner of evils issue from it into your lives and conversations.

AND as all base and vicious, so likewise all good and virtuous actions proceed from the heart, which is the seat of all true graces and virtue, as well as of sin and vice. If the heart be bad, the life cannot be good; and if the heart be good, the life cannot be bad. And therefore as ever you desire to live well, you must love well, and hope well, and desire well, and exercise all the other motions of the heart well. For, as it is in a natural life, so long as the heart is sound and strong, the body is sure to live and perform all vital actions, so is it in our life spiritual: if the heart be clean and pure, the soul is sure to live and perform all spiritual actions aright; for then they will all proceed from truth and sincerity of heart, which is the life of all other devotions and obedience to God, who *requireth truth in the inward parts*, Psal. li. 6. that is, such true and sincere obedience which issueth or proceedeth from the heart, from whence are the issues, all the issues and actions of a man's life.

HENCE therefore, as ever you desire either to part from evil, or to do good, either to avoid sin, or practise holiness, your great care must be to *keep your hearts with all diligence*, or above all other keepings; for till this be done, it is impossible for you to do either the one or the other.

BUT the great question is, how this so necessary and important a duty may be perform'd? and by what means you and I may keep our hearts so, that no wilful sin or impiety, nothing but sincere obedience and virtue may issue from them? A question, which I hope you are all desirous to have resolved. But let me tell you, it is in vain for me to shew you how to do it, unless you resolve beforehand to put it into practice. But, I hope, you are by this time so sensible of the necessity of it, that you need no more arguments to persuade you to it, only give me leave to premise this unto you, that it is a matter of greater difficulty, as well as necessity, than you are apt to fancy it to be. For our hearts being naturally hard, our minds dark, our consciences corrupted, our judgments erroneous, our thoughts unruly, and all our affections out of tune, it cannot but be very hard and difficult indeed to keep them in that order they ought to be in. But our comfort is, although it be hard, it is not impossible; yea, there is none of you but may do it, if you would
but

but set yourselves in good earnest upon the use of such means as I shall direct you to, in order to the effecting of it.

First, THEREFORE, if you would keep you heart right, you must be sure to set a very strict watch over all your senses: as those, who defend a city besieged or assaulted by an enemy, have a special care of the gates and passages that lead unto it, and set the strongest guards there, as knowing the enemy will strive to enter in that way: so here the senses are the gates or entrances into the heart; it is by them that things ordinarily enter into the mind; and therefore the Devil makes principal use of them, through which to convey his temptations into the hearts of men, presenting them with such sensible objects as may allure the soul to sin and vanity. Indeed there is no sensible object whatsoever but is apt to raise some sinful motion or other in you, either of love or hatred, fear or anger, joy or grief, in an inordinate manner. There are two senses especially that have extraordinary influence upon the soul, the eye and the ear: as for the eye, *David's* example may be a warning to the holiest men upon the earth to the world's end. What a troop of barbarous and mischievous sins did one single glance upon naked *Bathsheba* let into his soul? And *Achan's* example may be so too; who, seeing the *Babylonish* garment, began to covet it; and from coveting it went on to downright stealing of it, as you may read, *Josh. vii. 21.* Hence *Job* made a covenant with his eyes, *Job. xxxi. 1.* and so must you do too, if ever you desire to secure your hearts from the many temptations, which otherwise will enter in that way. And for your ears, you must keep them close too, stopp'd against all wanton and lascivious discourse, which by them enflames the heart with lust and concupiscence: neither must you let them listen to any malicious tales, or lying reports, that may be raised concerning your neighbour, which will either lessen your love unto him, or breed in you any scorn or contempt of him, and enrage your hearts some way or other against him. These therefore, and all other senses, which are as inlets into the soul, you must have a great care of; keep them, as we say, under lock and key; if possible, let nothing come in at them, which may any ways disturb or discompose your inward man, and then it will be easy for you to keep your hearts aright.

2dly, IF, notwithstanding all the care you take to avoid them, any sinful motions shall happen to arise, as they will sometimes, in your hearts, you must be sure to suppress them at the very first beginning of them; nip them in the bud, crush them at their first appearance, otherwise they will soon grow too strong and prevalent for you. Do not stand parlying with them, but so soon as ever you perceive your thoughts begin to be exorbitant, and to draw you into sin, give not the least consent unto them, but resist and quell them immediately. If you cannot bridle and manage your thoughts so as to keep them always in their proper order, yet you must be sure to keep so strict an hand over your wills and affections, that they may not approve or embrace them, but rather throw them out again with an utter abhorrence and detestation. It is an excellent rule prescribed by *St. Austin*, "that the soul accustom itself continually to examine and consider its own thoughts at the first rising: *Ad primum animi motum vel probare, vel reprobare quid cogitat, ut vel bonas cogitationes alat, vel statim extinguat malas.*" And he that doth not observe this, can never keep his own heart as he ought to do, but will be always liable to all manner of sins that either the Devil or his own corrupt nature can prompt him to.

3dly, BUT because this is a work too great for you to do by your own strength, you must look out for help, and implore God's assistance of you in the doing of it. Indeed, prayer is the surest guard that you can set about your hearts: for as the psalmist says, *except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh in vain*, *Psal. cxxvii. 1.* so here, except the Lord keep your hearts, your watching of them will stand you in no stead; for the heart of man is so desperately wicked, that nothing but the grace and power of almighty God can keep it within its bounds: but our comfort is, that God is as ready to assist us, as we are to desire it of him. And therefore let it be not only your daily but constant practice to pray to God to keep your hearts, *Psal. cxli. 3, 4. Matt. xxvi. 41.*

4thly, LET your prayer to God for this purpose be backed with faith in Jesus Christ, without whom you can do nothing, as he himself tells you *Joh. xv. 5.* you cannot pray, nor hear, nor give an alms, nor do any thing else acceptably without him, much less can you keep your hearts without him, nor by him without faith in him, which is the means whereby we receive grace and power from him to make and keep our hearts pure, *Acts xv. 9.* indeed a very historical faith, or full assent to the

the truths asserted in scripture, will conduce very much to the keeping our hearts in an holy awe of God, and fear of sin, much more such a faith whereby we trust in the merits of Jesus Christ for the enabling of us to do it, *Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13.*

Lastly, HAVING thus guarded your hearts with prayer and faith, possess them continually with the apprehensions of God's omnipresence, that his eye always sees, his ear hears you, his hand registereth the very motions of your hearts, as well as the outward actions of your life, *Prov. xxi. 2.* And therefore, whensoever you find any sinful motions begin to rise in your hearts, check them with this consideration, that the eternal God takes notice of them; he always observes the very imaginations of thy heart, and knows thy thoughts afar off, *Psal. cxxix. 27.* And if the presence of a man, or often of a child, can deter thee from committing lewdness; how much more should the presence of almighty God himself do it? Let such thoughts therefore as these are always dwell in your hearts, and then be sure no sin or lust can lodge there, but you will keep your hearts safe and sound against all assaults that can be made against them.

SERMON CXXXIX.

Of taking upon us Christ's Yoke.

MATTH. xi. 29.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

ALTHOUGH our blessed saviour in the foregoing verse promiseth rest to those that labour, and are heavy laden, if they will but come to him, yet we must not think that they that come to him shall have nothing to do, or that they shall rest from doing good, as well as from suffering evil. It is true, what Christ hath done and suffered for us, of itself is sufficient to expiate our sins, and to reconcile us unto God. For it was he that trod the wine-press of his father's wrath alone, no creature being in a capacity to assist him. And therefore the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons before God must be wholly ascribed to the merit of his death and passion; nothing that we can do signifying any thing at all without it. But howsoever, though Christ thus came to expiate, he did not come to patronize our sins; nor to die for that we might still live in them. He hath freed us indeed from the curse of the law, but not from our obedience to it. He hath taken off our obligations to the punishments, but not to our observance of it: for he himself hath told us, that *he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil and establish them, Matt. v. 17.* Hence the apostle having proved, that *we are justified by faith without the works of the law, Rom. iii. 27.* he presently adds, *do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law, ver. 31.* Where we may observe, by the way, the great mistake and error of those who contend and assert, that wheresoever St. Paul speaks of *the deeds or works of the law*, as having no hand in our justification, he is to be understood only of the levitical or ceremonial law, not of the moral. But nothing can be clearer than that the apostle in this place speaks only of the deeds

deeds of the moral law, saying, *that we are justified by faith without them.* For it is plain, that he here speaks of that law which faith doth not make void, but establish: whereas it is agreed on all hands, that the ceremonial law is utterly abolished by the coming of Christ, and that it is the moral law only that is established by faith in him; and by consequence that they are the deeds of the moral, not of the ceremonial law, which the apostle here excludes from our justification before God, although it be still in force as much as ever, or rather more; we having now more and stronger obligations upon us to observe it, than they had before the coming of Christ: forasmuch as we have now clearer explications of it, both by the doctrine and example of our blessed saviour, and also greater encouragements, because we may be now assured, that how much soever we *abound in the work of the law, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. yea, and we have a promise of greater assistance now by the spirit of God himself, which Christ will give to them that come to him; so that we have all the obligations imaginable upon us, to love and obey God in whatsoever he commands.

WHEN Christ therefore promiseth to give rest to them that come unto him for it, we must still remember what kind of rest it is; not a rest in but from their sins: he'll ease them from their former yokes and burdens which they laboured under, and were overladen with; but so that they must take his easie yoke upon them, and his light burden; *take my yoke, saith he, upon you, &c.*

THIS therefore being that which our blessed Lord, from whom we expect both pardon and salvation, requires of all those that come unto him, and by consequence that expect any thing from him, as I hope we all do, it must needs be a matter of very great moment and importance to us all, rightly to understand his will and pleasure in these words, and what it is that he requireth of us; which that you may do, I shall endeavour to explain them to you clearly and distinctly as they lie in order.

First, SAITH he, *take my yoke upon you*: for the opening of which words we must consider what yoke it is that he here speaks of, and how we must take it upon us. As for the first: we must know that there is a threefold yoke of Christ, which all are bound to take upon them that come to him.

1st, THE yoke of his doctrine; what he hath taught we must know and believe therefore because he hath taught it. It is true, there are many things which Christ hath now revealed and discovered to us, which mankind before were either altogether ignorant of, or at the best very doubtful in, which they that come to Christ are bound to believe, upon his word or testimony confirmed by many and real miracles, wrought on purpose for the confirmation of them: as for example, the doctrine of the trinity, that there are three persons in one nature, every one of which is God, and yet all three but one God: that the father begat the son, the son was begotten of the father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from both; and yet one was not before another, nor one greater than another, but all three of the self-same individual nature, glory, power, majesty, co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal to one another. And the doctrine of the incarnation; that as in the trinity there be three persons in one nature, so in Christ there are two natures in one persons, the divine and human nature, and both in their perfection; so that he was both perfectly God, of the self-same substance with the father, and like unto him in all things, his personal properties only excepted; and perfectly man, of the self-same substance with us, and like unto us in all things, our sinful infirmities only excepted. To which we may add the doctrine of the resurrection, which he hath so frequently and so clearly discovered, *viz.* that at the last day, when the son of man shall come to judge the world, both the sea and the earth shall give up their dead; that at the sound of a trumpet, the dust of every body shall immediately gather up itself from all places whithersoever it hath been dispersed, and haste every particle of it into its proper place again, so as to make up the self-same individual body which it did before: to which the soul also being united, the same numerical persons shall be restored again, to live in happiness or misery for evermore.

NOW these and such-like truths which the light of nature, as it is now clouded with sin, could never have discovered, our blessed saviour hath so clearly taught and revealed to us, that there is nothing in the world that we have, or can have more ground to believe, than we have to believe them. It is true, they are myste-

ries which our senses cannot perceive, nor reason fathom, so as to comprehend them; yet howsoever reason itself cannot but conclude them most certain, because of the infallible testimony which God himself hath given of them. So that we have more reason to believe them, than we have to believe what we see or hear: for our senses we know are fallible, and we have often found them deceive us; but we cannot say so of God, it being impossible for him to deceive or lye. And therefore all that reason hath to do, about the mysteries which God reveals, is only to search into the grounds that we have to believe them to be revealed by God. For a divine revelation being once proved, or supposed, reason itself requires an absolute assent unto it; and that we concern ourselves no farther about it, but to believe it, because God hath revealed it, whether we understand it or no. For there are many things in natural philosophy, and geometry itself, which we know by experience, or infer from reason to be really true and certain, though we cannot understand the reasons of them, nor imagine how they come to be so; how much more when we speak of divine mysteries, should we captivate our reason, and submit it wholly to the infallible testimony, which the supreme truth hath given to them; not believing them more or less, because we do or do not understand them, but resolving our faith wholly and only into the testimony of God: and this is that which our blessed Lord requires of those that come unto him, saying, *take my yoke upon you*; whereby he enjoins us to believe what he saith, and submit to his doctrine, without suffering our reason any farther to interpose, than only to search into the grounds and motives which we have to believe that it is his doctrine, and he hath said it; which whosoever is convinced of, must look no farther, but take his word for it, and therefore believe it because he said it; yea, therefore said it, that we might believe it. And whosoever dares pry too much into the secrets of God, or deny any mystery revealed in the gospel, because they forsooth cannot understand it, nor make their shallow apprehensions reach unto the bottom of it, they have not yet taken Christ's yoke upon them; they have not learned to submit their judgments unto his, nor to believe the gospel as they ought to do, even upon the infallible testimony and authority of him that hath revealed it.

2dly, THE yoke of his discipline. For as we must believe what he hath said, only because he hath said it; we so must observe what he hath commanded, only because he hath commanded it: and as we are to believe his sayings, though they be never so much above our reason, so are we to observe his laws, though they be never so contrary to our temper and inclinations. And certainly, as his doctrine is the highest that ever was revealed to the sons of men, so is his discipline the strictest that we can be under. For he is so far from those horrid opinions, that the *Liber-tines* and *Antinomians* would father upon him, even from indulging sin, and licensing iniquity, as his pretended vicar at *Rome* doth, that he requireth universal obedience, to all the moral law, in the highest manner that can possibly be expressed. Indeed, one great end of his coming into the world, was to reform and better it; and not only to satisfy for our former sins, but to shew us also how to order our future lives exactly, according to the commands of God. Hence it was that he took off those false glosses which the scribes and pharisees had put upon the moral law, making as if it required nothing but external obedience; and hath declared to the world, that each command is to be understood in its fullest latitude, and in the strictest sense that possibly can be put upon it.

THUS in the fifth of St. *Matthew* he sheweth, that the sixth commandment is not only to be understood of actual murdering another, but of being angry at, or despising our brother, ver. 21, 22. That the seventh commandment is to be understood, not only of adultery in the act, but even in the very thoughts, ver. 27, 28. That the third commandment doth not only forbid perjury, but taking the name of God in vain, ver. 33, 34, 37. That the law of retaliation, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hath reference only to courts of judicature, but as for private persons, they ought not so much as to resist evil; *but if any man would take away their coat, they should let him have their cloak also*; so as never to be forward to contend with any man about the things of this world, ver. 38, 39. and that we do not fulfil the law, by loving our friends or neighbours only, but we must love our very enemies too, ver. 44. And in the next chapter he shews us, that it is not enough that a man be just and honest in his dealings, so as not to cheat others to enrich himself, but that we should be so unconcerned about the world, as not to take care or thought for the morrow, chap. vi. 34. but that the main and only design

design that we carry on in this life, be to prepare for another, *to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*, ver. 20.

THUS I might shew you all along how our saviour himself prescribes the strictest rules, both of piety towards God, and of equity towards our neighbour, that it is possible for us to perform, or indeed for himself to prescribe, telling us in plain terms, *except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. v. 20. And therefore he expects that all those that come to him, should excel not only the more brutish and debauched part of mankind, but even the most formal hypocrites, and the highest moralists in the world, in vertue and godliness. He expects that they that name his name, and look for pardon and happiness upon his account, should shine like lights in the world; yea, so as to dazel the eyes of all that are about them, and shame them into repentance and true conversion, that none that see them, but may know they have been with Christ, observing the excellency of his laws and discipline, in all their actions both to God and man.

BUT here you must give me leave to stand still and wonder; wonder, I say, what is become of christianity in the world, and into what corner of the earth it is gone? That there was such a religion established here I verily believe, but there is little or no sign of it now amongst us. Infomuch that when I consider what divine mysteries Christ hath revealed to us, and what strict and holy lives he requires and expects from them that profess his name, I cannot but sometimes question with myself, whether there be such a thing as a christian in the world. I am sure, it is very rare to find one: but why should I wonder at that, when Christ himself hath told us, that *many are called, but few are chosen*? Matt. xx. 16. and hath told us, that his flock is *τὸ μίκρον ποίμνιον*, a very little flock, Luke xii. 32. However, I hope, that there be some amongst us who truly fear the Lord, and walk in his ways, turning religion neither into faction nor superstition, but sincerely endeavouring to take Christ's yoke upon them, and to observe his discipline exactly, although they be so few, so very few, that they are not discernable.

3dly, THE yoke of the cross. Which our saviour hath made the badge of his disciples; so that as the cross bore him, they must bear it, if they would manifest themselves to be his disciples: *if any man, saith he, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*, Matt. xvi. 24. that is, they that would go after Christ, so as to be his disciples indeed, must deny themselves whatsoever seems profitable or advantageous for them, whensoever it comes into competition, with his interest in the world, or theirs in him; so as to think no duty too great to undertake, no misery too heavy to undergo, so that he may be glorified by them on earth, and they may be glorified by him in heaven; so far from taking pleasure in sin, that it is their only trouble; and so far from being troubled at what they suffer for Christ, that it is their great pleasure: therefore, saith St. Paul, *I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake*, 2 Cor. xii. 10. yea, and all the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, Acts v. 41. Oh the excellent temper of a real christian! who cannot only trample upon the seeming greatness, but also upon the very briars and thorns of this present world, with pleasure and delight! looking upon it not as his misery, but his happiness and honour to suffer reproaches, troubles, yea, death itself for Christ, who suffered infinitely more for us, than we can do for him; as reckoning with St. Paul, that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us, Rom. viii. 18.

AND verily, it is no wonder, that they who come to Christ, take this yoke upon them, so as to reckon that they can loose nothing for him, as knowing they have all things in him: neither properly can it be counted misery, which is both accompanied with and leadeth to the highest happiness imaginable, even the love and favour of almighty God. Which being the only object of their souls desires, who come to Christ, they cannot but esteem themselves happy in attaining it whatsoever it costs them. Or howsoever, they that come to him, so as to be his disciples, cannot expect to fare better in the world than he their Lord and master did; and therefore should prepare themselves before-hand, and resolve to take upon them, not only the yoke of his doctrine, so as to believe what he hath taught, and the yoke of his discipline, so as to observe what he hath commanded, but the yoke of his cross too, so as to bear whatsoever he shall see good to lay upon them, in order to his present and their future glory.

NEITHER

NEITHER is it sufficient thus to take the yoke of Christ upon you, but you must do it too with that willingness, alacrity and patience, as he requires you. So that you must not only make his religion, that he hath taught you, your business, but your choice and recreation too; and so resign and submit your wills to his, as to be as ready to do, or suffer, any thing that he requires, as he is pleased to require it. For to speak home unto you, if you expect to be pardoned and saved by him, he expects to be served and honoured by you; yea, he expects that you should be wholly his; and by consequence should live as those who are none of your own, but being bought with a price, yea, so high a price as his most precious blood, you should glorify him both in your souls and bodies, which are his, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. And therefore, you do in vain profess to be his disciples, and to trust on him for pardon and salvation, unless you submit your necks to his yoke, and cheerfully both do, and suffer, whatsoever he shall see good to lay upon you.

BUT then you'll say, what benefit shall we have by coming unto Christ? for it seems, tho' he take one off, he'll put another yoke upon us, and so we shall not be freed from our troubles, under which we laboured, and were heavy laden, but only exchange one sort of trouble for another. It is true, Christ will not ease you of all your troubles, so as to live for the future without care and trouble in the world; yet the benefit that you receive by coming to him, is far greater than I am able to express. For the burden which he frees you from is altogether intolerable, so that you are not able to bear it, without sinking under it, into the bottomless pit of eternal horror and confusion. Whereas the trouble he puts you to, is in its own nature nothing else but the work that you were made for, and so is indeed your real happiness, or what tends unto it: so that there is nothing of real trouble in it, but only as your corrupt fancies imagine it to be so; because it is contrary to your sinful temper and inclinations. Hence our saviour himself here tells you, that *his yoke is easy, and his burden is light*, ver. 30 that is, there is nothing at all of difficulty in the bearing of it, if our minds be but rightly inclined to it. And upon this account too it is, that St. John saith, that *his commandments are not grievous*, 1 Joh. v. 3. they may be grievous to flesh and blood, but not to one that is really Christ's disciple, because such a one cannot but in his judgment esteem it to be his honour, and by his experience find it to be his happiness, as well as duty, to observe and obey whatsoever he that made and redeemed him is pleased to require of him.

THUS I have shewn you your saviour's mind and meaning in saying, *take my yoke upon you*; what now remains but that you do it. I know you all expect and desire to be saved, and believe that *there is no other name given under heaven, whereby you can be saved, but the name of Christ*. But now you see what Christ himself, that came to save you, expects from you, in order to his saving of you, even that you take his yoke upon you. Let me therefore beseech you in his name, that as you outwardly profess to believe in him, so you would endeavour sincerely to obey him; devote yourselves to his service, and adjust your lives to his commands; believe what he hath told you; perform what he hath enjoined you; submit to what he imposeth on you; take his yoke upon you, and learn of him to be meek and lowly, and he himself hath assured you, that *ye shall find rest to your souls*.

NOW it being so necessary for all those that come to Christ, and expect any thing from him, to take his yoke upon them, our saviour here in the next place shews how we may do it, even if we do but learn of him, especially in being meek and lowly. *And learn of me*, saith he, implying that he requires nothing of us, but what himself hath done before us. And if we would but walk in his steps, and write after his copy, our work was done; for he requires no more of us but to do as he did. It is none but his own yoke that he would have us take upon us, that which he himself had born before us, and for us too. *Take my yoke upon you*, saith he, *and learn of me*: as if he should have said, I am your Lord and master, you profess yourselves to be my scholars and disciples; and if you would carry and behave yourselves as becomes my disciples, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me*, so as to practice what I teach you, both by my precept and example. From whence we may observe, that all who profess to believe in Christ, and expect happiness and salvation from him, should endeavour to walk as he walked, and in all their actions imitate the pattern which he hath set them, as St. Paul did, 1 Cor. xi. 1.

AND verily, could we do this, how holy, how happy should we be? for, questionless, as never man spake as Christ spake, so never man lived as he lived; he being the only person that ever lived on earth, *who did no sin, and in whose mouth*

was

was found no guile, 1 Pet. ii. 22. Indeed his whole man was so pure, so perfect, that there was not the least spot or blot either in his soul or body : there was no darkness in his mind, no error in his judgment, no vanity in his thoughts, no perverseness in his will, no pride in his spirit, no malice in his heart, no irregularity, no disorder in all his affections : and therefore no wonder that there was never an idle word heard come from him, nor any sort of an unseemly action perform'd by him : neither was he only thus free from evil, but fraught with good. Indeed, his whole life was but as one continued act of religion and charity ; for, as the apostle tells us, *he went about doing good*, Acts x. 38. Wheresoever he came, you still find him either praying, or preaching, or dispersing his miraculous charity, and goodness, amongst the people ; sometimes giving eyes to the blind, and legs unto the lame ; sometimes health to the sick, and life to the dead ; always doing some good act or other, for God, or men : insomuch that there is no grace, no virtue whatsoever, but what he hath given us an exact pattern and example of. I need not instance in particulars : his life no less than four times, and by four several writers infallibly recorded, doth sufficiently attest, how courteous he was in his carriage, how patient under his sufferings, how content with his condition, how compassionate to the miserable, how charitable to the poor, how submissive to his parents, how loving and just to all. And if we speak of his behaviour towards God, nothing that he did all his life long, but doth clearly manifest his extraordinary love to him, extraordinary trust on him, extraordinary zeal for him, extraordinary submission to him, and extraordinary diligence and care to reveal his will, advance his glory, and propagate his interest among the sons of men.

AND certainly, whatsoever our saviour, as man did ; he therefore did it, that we by him might learn how to do it : but of all those excellent and divine graces, that his blessed soul was endowed, and his life adorned withal, the principal things that he would have us to learn of him, is *to be meek and lowly in heart : learn of me*, saith he, *for I am meek and lowly in heart* ; not learn of me to work miracles, to heal the sick, or raise the dead ; not learn of me to turn water into wine, or to make a few loaves, to suffice thousands ; but *learn of me to be meek and lowly in heart*.

THIS, therefore, being the great lesson, which our blessed lord and master would have us learn of him, I shall endeavour at this time to teach you how to learn it.

First, THEREFORE, as for his *meekness*, it was so remarkable and extraordinary in him, that all the affronts and injuries, which he daily received, could never move him to anger. And tho' he was often sorrowful, and sometimes wept ; yet as he is never said to have laugh'd, so neither was he ever angry but once, and that was upon a just occasion, when the *Pharisees* upbraided him for doing good upon the sabbath-day ; then indeed he is said to have looked on them with anger, *being grieved for their hardness of their hearts*, Mark iii. 5. so that he was angry at them not for any injury which they offered to him, but for the injury which they did themselves by their unbelief, *and the hardness of their hearts* : but when himself was only concerned, how reproachfully soever they spake against him, how cruelly soever they used him, his meek and serene spirit was never moved or disturbed at it.

MOSES, indeed, hath the testimony of God himself, that he was the *meekest man upon the face of the earth* ; yet the *Israelites provoked his spirit*, so that he spake *unadvisedly with his lips*, Psal. cvi. 33. But in this our blessed saviour incomparably excelled *Moses*, being of that rare temper, that gentle nature, that meek and mild disposition, that all the injuries which the malice of men or devils conspired to heap upon him, could never extort a rash, angry, or inconsiderate word from him : *when he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to God that judgeth righteously*, 1 Pet. ii. 23. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth ; he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb, so he opened not his mouth*, Isa. liii. 7. Thus when his own disciple betrayed him into the hands of his enraged enemies, with an hypocritical and dissembling kiss, all that he replied was only, *Judas, dost thou betray the son of man with a kiss ?* Luke xxii. 48. and when the malicious multitude, that thirsted after his blood, had now got him into their hands, and his disciples making some small resistance, one of them *smote the servant of the high-priest, and cut off his right ear* ; he was so far from being discomposed, or disturbed in his mind by any unruly and revengeful passion, that he wrought a miracle to restore and heal it, Luke xxii. 51. yea, and when his hands and feet were fastned to the cross with nails drove thro' them, those very sharp and exquisite pains, which wracked and

tortured his whole body, could not in the least exasperate, or provoke his soul against them that did it : yea, so far was he from being angry with them himself, that he prayed to his father that he would not be angry with them neither ; in the midst of all his torments, crying out, *father, forgive them, they know not what they do*, Luke xxiii. 34.

Now as your Lord and master carried himself to his, so he expects that you do the like towards your enemies, even that you learn of him to be meek and gentle, to them also that will not be so to you : for he would have you do, as he did, live above the world, so as to condemn both all the overtures that it can make, and all the injuries that it can do unto you ; otherwise you can never enjoy him, nor yourselves neither : *in your patience*, saith he, *possess ye your souls*, Luke xxi. 19. implying, that when a man is impatient under any trouble, and incensed against the instruments of it, he is at present besides himself ; he doth not enjoy or possess his own soul, but is strangely transported into a kind of frenzy, which makes him incapable, while it lasts, of using his reason, or exerting the several faculties of his soul as he ought to do : and I suppose there are none here present that indulge this passion, but find by experience, how unfit it makes them for temporal, much more for spiritual employments : and, I am sure, by giving way to this passion, we do ourselves more hurt, than it is possibly for any one else to do us ; for hereby we deprive ourselves of our very selves, and suffer that fire to be kindled in our breasts, which, if not timely prevented, will break out into an open flame, and burn up and destroy both soul and body.

AND therefore, if any of you desire to carry yourselves like christians, or to be happy, even in this life, you must be sure to keep down this turbulent and unruly passion ; and if at any time through surprize, or inadvertency, it begin to rise, be sure to nip it in the bud ; if you do not conquer it at first, it will conquer you at last, and so occasion your misery in this, as well as in the world to come. Whereas, could you always keep your spirits calm, and your soul serenely in the midst of those various storms and tempests you meet with here below, whatsoever may be without, there will still be happiness and tranquility within ; yea, our saviour himself hath pronounced such to be blessed ; *blessed*, saith he, *are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*, Matt. v. 5. *The meek shall inherit the earth*, saith David, *and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace*, Psal. xxxvii. 11. and as to be of such a composed, sedate, meek, and gentle temper, is advantageous to ourselves, so is it very acceptable unto God : for *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, is in the sight of God of great price*, 1 Pet. iii. 4. it is an ornament, yea, an ornament of great price, and that in the esteem of God himself. And therefore, if you would live quietly within yourselves, or acceptably towards God, you must use all means imaginable to suppress this troublesome and mischievous passion of anger and malice, and learn of Christ your master to be meek.

AND lowly in heart : which is the next particular virtue which our saviour would have us learn of him ; who certainly hath given us the highest example of it, that ever was, or ever can be set before us : it was an eminent instance of his humility, that he being the immortal God, should condescend so much as to become a mortal man. That eternity should stoop to time, heaven bow down to earth, he that made the world be born into it, and the creator of all things become himself a creature ; who is able to think of it without astonishment, or to speak of it without adoration ? that he *who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, should make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of men*, Phil. ii. 6, 7. Oh mystery of mysteries ! who is able to dive into the bottom of this divine humility ? and yet, as if this had not been enough, this infinite and all-glorious person did not only become man, but one of the meanest of men ; not only a servant, but the servant of servants. For though he had thousands of glorious saints and angels to minister to him in heaven, he came down that himself might minister to the unworthiest of all creatures, even to men on earth : for, as he himself saith, *the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*, Matt. xx. 28. indeed, although he was the supreme governor and disposer of all things in the world, yet when he was here below, he chose nothing for himself out of all things which he had, but the lowest and meanest that could be imagined. His mother, whom he chose to be born of, was none of the greatest ladies of the world, but a poor virgin, fit to be spouse to no greater a person than a carpenter : and though all the palaces in the earth were his, yet he chose to be

be born in a stable, where he had no other cradle but a manger: and though while a child of twelve years old, he knew who he was, and whence he came, as appears from his answer to his mother, saying, *wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?* Luke ii. 49. yet howsoever he humbly submitted, and was subject to his mother, and the honest carpenter to whom she was espoused, and followed his trade, which, as some of the antients assert, was principally to make ploughs and yokes: and in this despicable and poor condition the king of glory himself lived, until he was about thirty years of age; and when he appeared upon the stage of the world, though all the world was his, yet he had not one foot of land in all the world, for *he had not where to lay his head*, Luke ix. 58. neither did he chuse to converse with the rich and learned part of the world, but a company of poor and silly fishermen were his continual associates. After which time he was so far from being honoured or respected of men, and from aspiring after the applause, or enjoying the pleasures of the world, that he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, derided, spit upon, accused, arraigned, condemned by those very persons, who could not pronounce the sentence against him, had not he himself vouchsafed them breath to do it; nor have moved either hand or tongue against him, had not he assisted them: and after all this, he submitted to the most vile, most painful, and most ignominious death, that could possibly be inflicted upon the basest of men; being crucified betwixt two malefactors, persons justly condemned to die for their atrocious crimes and villanies: and thus, as he came into the world, so he went out again, in the lowest and meanest manner that possibly he could.

Oh wonder of wonders! that highness itself should become thus lowly, glory and excellency itself thus humble! But tell me then, shall the glorious God of heaven himself become thus humble and lowly; and shall we poor mortals upon earth be proud? Shall beauty, glory, majesty, supereminency itself, think no place too mean, no work too low, no service too contemptible, no death too vile for him; and is it possible for such mean, such low, such despicable, such vile, and altogether worthless creatures as we are; is it possible, I say, that we should talk of our honour and dignity, that we should think every thing below us, or that we should be arrogant and conceited of what we have or do? What, poor and proud too? Shall he that had all things be proud of nothing, and shall we that have nothing be proud of all things? What a strange thing is the heart of man become, that was at first so composed, that nothing but infinite goodness itself could fill it; and now the least blast of wind, yea vanity itself, immediately swells and puffs it up? and let me tell you, whatever other sins many of you may be free from, I fear there are few, or none, but is guilty of this. But I cannot but sometimes wonder with myself, what it is that men or women are so generally proud of: is it the largeness of your estate, the fulness of your trade, or the greatness of your credit in the world? is it the proportion of your bodies, the comeliness of your features, or the applause and honour which you have from others, that you are proud of? but if you be proud of these things, you are proud indeed, but it is of nothing: for these things have no real being in the world, nor any other existence, but only in your own corrupt and deluded fancies. It is true, silver and gold are things, but they are not riches, unless you think them so: the same may be said of beauty, which we may shut our eyes against, and wink into blackness and deformity. And as for honour and applause, that is a mere chimera, a dream, a shadow, a very, very nothing; which philosophy itself, as well as theology, could never yet define or describe, either its nature, or its seat, what or where it is. And, though these things may seem paradoxes to you, yet your saviour knew them to be real truths. And therefore, you never find him any more desirous of, or concerned about those things, than as if there were no such things in the world, as really there is not. When he had taken out nature upon him, he came in and went out of the world again, without ever taking notice of those things, unless it was to reprove men for doting of them. He could see nothing upon earth to be proud of: and therefore, though all things were at his service and command, yet he was not only humble himself, but hath enjoined all his disciples to be so too.

HENCE, therefore, if any of you desire to be christians indeed, the first lesson that you must learn of your Lord and master, is to be *meek and lowly*; still remembering that you can never think too highly of God, nor too lowly of yourselves. It is for men in Bedlam to please themselves with feathers, to think their prison to be a palace, and their chains to be badges of honour; and so to pride themselves in the vain imaginations of their own distracted fancies. As for such amongst you

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who are come unto yourselves, and by consequence unto Christ too, you should carry yourselves like men of wisdom and understanding, that know you have many things to be humbled for, but nothing in the world to be proud of. And therefore, howsoever you are in others, you are still to be vile and base in your own eyes; looking upon yourselves as less than the least of all God's mercies, and greater than the greatest of all sinners: and let me tell you, the lower you are in your own, the higher you will be in God's esteem; *for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*, Luke xiv. 11. *For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble*, 1 Pet. v. 5. So that he that is clothed with humility, need not fear but he shall be adorned with all true grace and virtue whatsoever. And Christ himself hath here promised, that such amongst you as are *meek and lowly shall find rest to your souls*.

AND so I come to the last thing to be explained in few terms, even what is that *rest* here spoken of. In general, 'tis rest for our souls, and that both in this, and also in the world to come. First, even in this life: they that take Christ's yoke upon them, and are *meek and lowly in heart*, find unspeakable rest, quiet, and satisfaction in their souls, from the very performance of those duties, and the exercise of those graces, which Christ requireth of them. Inasmuch, that howsoever their outward condition be, there cannot but be calmness and tranquility within. For the soul being made on purpose to love, honour, and obey its maker, it was so composed, that it cannot but be impatient, restless and unquiet, whilst it is doing any thing else but what it was designed for. And therefore, as the Lord himself hath told us, *there is no peace unto the wicked*. Neither indeed can be; their wickedness itself raising an intestine war in their own bowels, which bears down all before it, and keeps the soul in a continual hurry and confusion. Whereas one that is constant and conscientious in doing what God requires of him, cannot but find a secret kind of peace and satisfaction within himself, arising from the apprehensions that he hath done his duty, and pleased God that made him: which is certainly the highest happiness that we can attain to upon earth, and an earnest of that everlasting rest, which we expect in heaven, where we shall rest from our troubles, which shall no more befall us; rest from our fears, which shall no more seize on us; rest from sin, which shall no more be in us; rest from *Satan*, who shall no more come near us; yea, *we shall rest from all our labours, and our works shall follow us*, Revel. xiv. 13. O glorious rest! when we shall not only rest from whatsoever is evil, but rest in him that is the chiefest good; where we shall be infinitely more happy than here we can be: when our souls, shall solace themselves in the embracements of love itself, and rest in the center of all perfections: when all the faculties of our souls, and members of our bodies, shall be restored to their primitive frame and constitution; and so our whole man shall be capable of perfectly beholding, admiring, and enjoying beauty, glory and goodness itself. This, therefore, is the accomplishment of that rest which they shall find to their souls, who take Christ's yoke upon them, and learn of him to be meek and lowly.

THUS I have done my duty in explaining these words of our blessed Lord unto you; yours now begins, which is, to put them into practice. I know you all hope and desire to be saved by Christ: but I beseech you to consider, upon what terms you can be saved by him. For here you see, that this very person, from whom you expect salvation, hath strictly enjoined you in order to it, to take his yoke upon you, and to learn of him to be meek and lowly. So that you must make him the pattern of your lives here, or else you cannot expect that he should be the portion of your souls hereafter; unless you follow him in the ways of holiness upon earth, you cannot come to him in heaven. And therefore, let me advise you to go home, and bethink yourselves of your saviour's words, and what you have heard upon them; and if you matter not whether you be saved or no, think of them no more; but if you do, follow his directions, *take his yoke upon you*, &c.

S E R M O N CXL.

An Exhortation to the Love of God.

MATTH. xxii. 37.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy mind.

Exh. **L**ET me now bespeak your affection for the Lord your God; not the love you have for other things, but a love above all things; gather up your scattered affections from all things here below, and place them upon him that made them: put him not off any longer with overpowered passions, but love him most whom before you can never love too much; no, never fear excess in your love to God, which is capable of no other extreme, but only of defect. In other things, mediocrity is a virtue, but here it is a vice; for we must love him exceedingly, or we cannot love him truly; so that the only measure of our loving him, is to love him without measure: and therefore, he that thinks he loves God enough, doth not love him at all. In creature-comforts our affections may grow excessive, and our love exorbitant; but the transcendent perfections that reside in God, render him so incapable of being loved too much, that the highest passions that we can raise up to him, are still infinitely below what he deserves from us: no, take it for certain truth, you can never love the world too little, nor God too much. Our love to other things is like other rivers, the best when it keeps within its bounds; but our love to God is like the river *Nilus* in *Egypt*, most welcome when it overflows. Bridle therefore your passions to the creatures, but let them run loose to their creator: never fear loving him too much, seeing the highest of your passions is no more than finite; whereas the lowest of his perfections is no less than infinite: you can never love God more than you ought, and therefore love him as much as you can.

WHERE, when I say, you must always love him, I do not mean as if you should have some love for him as well as for other things, but that you should have more love for him than all things; for that is not accounted as love to God, which is either surpassed or equalled with our love to the creatures: and therefore whenever you hear me mention *loving of God*, you must still apprehend me speaking of such a love to him as exceeds and out-strips our love to all things besides; for we love God no more, than we love him more than all things else. He that loves God no more than other things, loves the other things more than God; for he hath no love for God at all, because he doth not love him above all. For I say again, we have no more love for him, than we have love for him above all other things: so long as our love is matched or over-topped with our love to other things, we may love the other things, but we do not love God: but the least degree of our love to God more than to all things else, makes it to be true and acceptable love to him. Some may love God many degrees beyond all things else, others few; and so one man may have more love to God than another; but he that loveth him never a degree beyond all things else, he hath no love for him at all. And therefore I say again, when you hear me advising you *to love God*, I would have you all along remember, I mean only such a love to him, as surmounts and exceeds your affections

to all things in the world besides : this is the love that God requires of us, and this is the love that we owe to God ; this therefore is the love that I counsel you all, as you will answer it at the dreadful day of Judgment, to fix upon the great God. It is too long already that you have loved other things more than God ; now, for shame, begin to love God more than all other things.

O, THEREFORE, that I knew what words to take unto myself, that whilst I am speaking, this sacred fire may kindle in all your souls, that you may no longer commit sacrilege in robbing God of that which he hath commanded you to appropriate to himself. I know, your affections are so glued to the world, that it is not in the power of man to rend them thence, much less is it within the reach of human strength to raise them up from earth to heaven, and from sin to God. But I know also it is by such counsels, commands, and exhortations to you, that God is pleased to work this and all other graces in you : it is by his ministers that he useth to strike this sacred fire out of your flinty hearts. To raise up therefore your affections to the most high God, give me leave to present some motives to you, and the Lord of his infinite mercy be pleased to work them upon you, that whilst you hear the voice of your fellow-creature sounding in your ears, you may feel the power of your great creator reaching to your hearts, wrenching your affections from all things here below, and mounting them up unto himself above.

WELL then: what motives shall I use to prevail upon you? Verily, my brethren, whilst I consider what considerations to lay before you, to blow up your affections unto God, there are so many crowd themselves into my busy thoughts, to be presented unto yours, that I scarce know where to begin; and when I have begun, I fear I shall scarce know where to end. I cannot look upon you, as being in this place, but I must tell you, you are bound to love the great God for it; for had not he loved you, you would not have been in God's house, but the devil's dungeon at this very moment; and certainly his love to you may well deserve your love to him: nay, I cannot fend mine eye any way, but it still brings me in new motives to love God. If I look above me, there are the heavens that he hath made for our future happiness; that beneath me, there is the earth he hath made for our present abode; if about me, there are the creatures he hath made for our use and comfort, all calling upon us to love that God that made them: nay verily, my very calling upon you to love God, is a mercy for which you are bound to love him; and the more I call upon you to love him, the more you are bound to love him for my calling upon you: nay, to speak plainly, if there be ever a soul in the congregation that loves God, let me tell thee, thou art bound to love him more for thy loving him at all; so that not only his love to thee, but thy love to him, should stir up in thee still greater affections for him: for assure thyself thou art infinitely engaged to him for thy loving of him, as well as for his loving of thee; for had not he first loved thee, thou couldst never have loved him.

THUS, I say, I can fix mine eyes upon nothing, but it supplies me with fresh motives to love God: but for my more orderly presenting them unto your thoughts, I shall digest them all into two heads, endeavouring to raise up your affections unto God from the consideration,

1st, OF the properties of that love we ought to have for God.

2^{dly}, OF the perfections of that God we ought to love.

I. FROM the properties of the love we owe to God. And certainly did we but know what it was to love God experimentally, as well as notionally, we should find there is greater happiness to be enjoyed, in the performance of this one duty, than in all the enjoyments that this world can afford us. Give me leave to shew you some of the rare properties of this divine love.

1. IT is the first and the great commandment, *Matth. xxii. 38.*

2. IT is the first commandment.

First, IN order, for this is the first of all the ten commandments, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me, Exod. xx. 3.* which is as much as if he should have said, thou shalt love nothing as God before me, worship nothing as God before me, serve nothing as God before me; nay, thou shalt not so much as have any other Gods before me. Whereas it is plain, that he that loves any thing more than God, or doth not love God more than all things, he hath, and loveth, other Gods before *Jehovah*; for whatsoever a man loves, and prefers before other things, that is his God. Thus a voluptuous person is said to make his belly his God, *Phil. iii. 19.* because he minds his belly before all things else: and therefore is covetousness called *Idolatry*, *Colos.*

Colos. iii. 5. because the covetous man minds and loves his riches more than all things else: and the reason is, because it is to God only to whom we owe the choicest of our affections. And therefore, whatsoever we love most, to that we give what is proper and peculiar to the God: and so, though it be not a God in itself, yet we make it one in our esteem. And therefore every one that loves any thing more than *Jehovah*, hath other Gods before him. Know ye then of a certainty, that every soul amongst you that loves any thing more than God, or doth not love God more than all things, is a cursed idolater: thou worshippest a false instead of a true God. Dost thou therefore love riches more than God? It is the mammon of unrighteousness that is thy God: is it the pleasures thou lovest more than God? then pleasures are thy God: is it thy husband or wife thou lovest more than God? then it is thy husband or wife that is thy God? is it thy children, thy liberty, thy health, thy credit, thy sins, thy life that thou lovest more than the great God? these, these are thy Gods, these are the deities thou worshippest. Wonder no longer at the *Persians* for adoring the sun; wonder not at the *Indians* or worshipping sticks and stones; wonder not at the *Americans* for falling down to Satan, nor at the *Papists* for bowing to images; but wonder, oh wonder at thyself that worshippest thyself, and lovest thine own concerns before the great God. Oh, my brethren! that you would bethink yourselves, what gross and cursed idolaters you all are, so long as you love any thing more than God: it is love that is the principal worship of the God of heaven, and this you give to the toys on earth. Oh consider with yourselves; what, love pleasures more than God! honours more than God! riches more than God! relations more than God! liberty more than God! life or any thing more than God! Thou shameful idolater, call thyself no longer christian, lay aside thy professions, pretend not to be a worshipper of the true God, so long as thou worshippest so many false ones before him. Oh cursed apostacy! that we who give up our names in baptism unto God, would now give our souls to the devil, our love to the world, our affections to sin; who, instead of turning with the *Thessalonians* from idols unto God, 1 *Thess.* i. 9. turn with the *Indians* from God to idols; instead of leaving the world to cleave to God, we leave God to cleave to the world. Give me leave to use the apostle's exhortation, now I am preaching to you christians, as well as if I was preaching to the idolatrous heathens; *brethren, keep yourselves from idols*, 1 John v. 21. Oh keep yourselves from idols, from idol-riches, from idol-honours, from idol-lusts, from idol-self; oh turn from these and all other idols, to serve the living and true God: remember it is the first command, *thou shalt have no other Gods before me*; which, in effect, is as much as to say, thou shalt love nothing more than me.

Secondly, IN dignity, as it hath the first place, so hath it the best being for its immediate object: in the other commands, some of them respect God's name, others his worship, others his sabbaths, others his people, but this respects his person; and therefore it is the most proper and peculiar worship that we can perform unto him. And therefore, as ever you desire not only to forsake your false Gods, but to worship the true one, you must love him above all things; all other worship is but in reference unto this, and signifies nothing at all without it. It is true, praying, and reading, and hearing, and receiving of the sacrament, and the like, are all parts of God's worship; but alas! this is only the body; it is love to God that is the soul of worship: and these eternal performances before God are no further any true worship of him than as they have respect unto, and terminate in true love unto him, which indeed is the end of all ordinances. Why do you pray, but that you may love God? why hear, but to love God? why receive the sacrament, but to love God more? It is the love of God that is the great end of all these duties, and therefore it is the most proper and immediate worship that we can perform to God. And therefore St. *Augustine*, speaking of these words, in his tenth book *de civitate Dei*, saith, *In quo quid aliud mandatur, nisi ut ei quantum potest commendat diligendum Deum? lic est Dei cultus, hac vestra religio, hac recta pietas, hac tantum Deo debita servitus*: what is here commanded but to love God? this is the worship of God, this is true religion, this is right piety, this is the service due only unto God. And therefore ye in vain pretend to be religious, or to worship the true God, unless you love him above all things: this is the worship that he requireth from you, and this is the worship that
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you owe to him; do this, and then you serve the true God; leave this undone, and do what you will besides, you are still idolaters; for it is first,

Thirdly, IN performance. A man can perform no other command, until he first perform this: thou canst not pray, nor read, nor hear, nor give alms; thou canst do nothing as thou oughtest to do, unless thou first lovest God: for there is nothing good, but what proceeds from the love to the chiefest good; nothing is accepted by God, but what is grounded upon love to him. Thou mayst pray thy tongue, and hear thy ears to the very stumps; thou mayst fast thy body into a skeleton, and make thy couch to swim continually in thy tears; thou mayst bestow thy estate wholly upon the poor, and give thy body to be burned; thou mayst live like an angel, and die like a serpent; yet let me tell thee, without love to God, it signifies nothing: thy tears will be all rejected, thy prayers slighted, thy alms despised, and all thy performances disregarded, as things nothing worth, unless they proceed from love to God: and therefore, saith the apostle, *if I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have no charity, &c.* 1 Cor. xiii. 1. What charity doth he speak of? certainly love or charity to God, and for God's sake to men; without this thou mayst fill the air with sighs, the heavens with groans, the sea with tears, and yet find no favour or acceptance in the sight of God: no, thou must first love him above all things, before thou canst do any thing pleasing to him; not only because all the duties to him cannot be equivalent to the one horrid sin thou committest against him, in loving other things before him, but also because it is this love to God only that performs all other duties; without which God will never smell a sweet savour from them. What therefore though thou prayest? what though thou readeest? what though thou hearest? what though thou comest to church? what though thou performest all other duties unto God? if thou omittest this, thou hadst as good do nothing: for there is not a duty thou performest without this, that there is any thing of good, but a great deal of evil in it. Oh therefore, as ever you desire to do any thing pleasing unto God, you must first love him above all things. There is not the greatest duty, but without this will certainly be rejected; and there is not the least, but with it will certainly be accepted.

2. It is the greatest too, as well as the first commandment. For,

1. It is that to which all the rest tend: this is, as it were, the sea into which the other commands, as the lesser rivers, do all empty themselves. Not as if, in respect of the lawgiver, one is greater than another, for the same God commanded them all; but because all the rest are but as it were so many branches of this: so that there is not any of the rest but tend to the advancement of this. And therefore we cannot perform any other commands aright, unless our eye be fixed upon this.

Secondly, It is that under which the rest are all contained; so that a man that doth not love God, can do nothing; whilst he that doth love God, doth all things that are required of him: for, as the apostle saith, *all the law, to wit, of the second table, is fulfilled in one word, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*, Gal. v. 14. so we may well say, all, both law and gospel, is fulfilled in this one word, thou shalt love the Lord above thyself, and all things else: so that he that doth not perform this one command, cannot perform the other; but he that performeth this, cannot but perform the rest.

Thirdly, It is that in which they all end. Praying, and hearing, and repenting, faith, and hope, and sorrow, yea, all the other commands, will end with us, and so resolve themselves into this one, which shall never end; for *charity never faileth*, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. And therefore it is said, *ver. 13. and now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity*: because this is that in which the other are contained, and this is that which will continue when the other are all ceas'd.

Secondly, CONSIDER, that love to God will make all other duties easie. To him that doth not love God, the easiest duty is difficult; to him that doth love him, the difficultest duty is easie. For love is of that quality, that it makes us divest ourselves of our former selfishness, and to be inconsiderate of our own concerns, in comparison of his we love. How do enflamed lovers lay aside the thoughts of health, of quiet, liberty, life, and any thing for the enjoyment, and pleasing of the party they love: it is so in temporals, and certainly then much more in spirituals. If thy heart be set upon God, thou wilt think nothing too great for him, no duty too great to undertake, do misery too heavy to undergo, for him
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whom thy soul loveth. Thus the spouse in the *Canticles*, her soul being enflamed with love to Christ, she forgets her rest, her sleep, her ease, her quiet, to find him she loved; *she sought him upon her bed, in the streets, in the broad way every where to find him* Can. iii. 1, 2, 3. And so thou, if thou dost indeed love God, wilt count all things as loss, and dross, and dung in comparison of him: friends, relations, estates, preferments, health, strength, liberty, life, thou wilt look upon these things as not worthy to come into competition with God. And therefore thou wilt not baulk the least duty imaginable, for the attainment of the highest glory conceivable. What is the reason you are so loath to pray, loath to hear, loath to read the scriptures, loath to give alms, loath to repent, and loath to perform other duties? And what is the reason you are so backward to these duties, and those duties are so hard to you? why, the reason is, because you do not love God. If you loved him, it would not be your trouble, but your joy to come before him: thus *David*, *I rejoiced when they said unto me, let us go up to the house of the Lord*, Psal. cxxii. *Yea, a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness*, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. Thus will it be with thee, though perhaps, now that thou hast no love but hatred for God, thou thinkest it tedious and irksome to pray and hear, and sit so long in the house of God; but let me tell thee, if ever God be pleased to raise up thy affections to himself, the hardest duty will be as easy as ever the easiest duty was hard unto thee; thou wilt take as much, yea more delight in drawing nigh unto God, than ever thou didst in running from him. And therefore, if ever thou wouldst have the paths of wisdom pleasant, the ways of holiness delightful to thee, thou must endeavour to get thy heart emptied of its love to sin, which as yet it is filled with, and filled with the love of God, of which as yet it is empty.

Thirdly, If thou lovest God, *all things shall work together for thy good*, Rom. viii. 28. So long as thou lovest any thing more than God, there is not the best of thy seeming goods, but are real evils to thee: whereas if thou lovest him above all things, there is not the worst of thy seeming evils, but shall be real goods unto thee. Oh, then who would love any thing more than God, to have his mercies turned into miseries? who would not love God more than all things, to have his miseries turned into mercies?

Fourthly, It is the work of angels, and the happiness of heaven. This is that crown of glory we all expect to have set upon our heads, when we arrive at our father's kingdom: gold and silver there is none, but joy and love to God. Oh, how shall our hearts be transported with it? And certainly, for all the low conceits that you and I may have of true love to God, certainly the angels and glorified saints find it to be the richest treasure in all their kingdoms: so that if you love God, you may antedate heaven, and bring down those joys to you, before God takes you up to them.

Fifthly, Love to God is the best evidence of our title to the crown of glory. If there be any flaw or defect in your love to God, all your other evidences will be of no force; but if thy love to God be true and cordial, thou hast as sure a title to the joys of heaven, as thou hast to thy estate upon earth; and thou hast never an evidence, can more firmly prove thy interest in what thou hast here, than true love to God will evidence thy title to what thou hopest for hereafter. For if thy love to God be true love, thy other graces are all true graces; thy repentance is true faith, thy humility is true humility; and if thy graces be true on earth, thy glory must needs be great in heaven. And therefore, if you would know whether you have any title to heaven, consider what love you have to God on earth. And assure thyself, when thou and I shall be summoned at the grand assize to bring in our evidences for the kingdom of heaven, whatsoever other evidences we bring, unless we bring this, even to love God above all things, the rest will all signify nothing: this one evidence is enough without all other, and all other are nothing without this.

Sixthly, Love God truly above all things here, and thou shalt enjoy all things perfectly in God hereafter, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Let him have the principal room in thy heart on earth, and thou shalt have a principal room in his house in heaven: let thy heart be wholly set upon him in time, and thy soul shall be certainly blessed in him to eternity. Oh therefore, as ever you desire to be lifted up to the height of happiness, rather than thrown down into the depth of misery, when you

die, love nothing more than God, but God more than all things whilst you live.

Secondly, FROM the perfections of that God, whom we ought to love. Now there are two things you know in a person, which draw our affections to him;

First, HIS love to us.

Secondly, HIS loveliness in himself.

AND certainly, if you and I could fix our contemplations upon the infinite expressions of God's love to us, and the infinite perfections of his loveliness in himself, we should be as unable to keep off our affections from him, as we are now unable to draw them, and raise them up to him. Well, give me leave to be your remembrancer this evening, of what God hath done for you, and of what he is in himself; and that after all that I shall say, you are still resolved to love yourselves, your health, your wealth, your sins, your lusts, your life, or any thing more than God, for my part, I shall almost despair of ever being an instrument of good to your souls more: for if such considerations as these are, even of what God is in himself, and of what he hath been to you, will not prevail upon you to leave doting upon toys, and to *love the Lord your God with all your hearts*, for my part I know not what others can. Well then,

First, CONSIDER God's love to you, or how much you are engaged to him for what he hath done for you; but before I make a farther progress into this consideration, it will be first necessary to remove a stumbling-block which lies in our way. For some of you may say, have you not taught us all along that we must love God more than all things? whereas if we love him only for what he hath done for us, we shall love ourselves more than him. For by this means our eye being fixed principally upon ourselves, we should mind ourselves only, and him no farther than as he is beneficial to us, not at all as he is transcendently glorious in himself; and so our affections being so mercenary and selfish, they cannot possibly be filial and sincere. And how can it be lawful for us thus to eye ourselves more than him, or him only in respect to ourselves?

To this I answer,

First, WE must distinguish betwixt the occasion and scope of our love, that which first draws my love to him, and that which afterwards fixeth my love upon him. I do not say, this is the great reason why we ought to love God; for certainly he infinitely more deserves our love for what he is in himself, than for what he is to us: for the expressions of his love to us are but finite, whereas the perfections of his loveliness in himself are infinite. But howsoever, I may make use of this consideration as a motive to stir up your love to him: and certainly, tho' the principal reason why we should love God, is, because he is so infinitely good in himself, yet the principal motive of our love to him, is the consideration of what continual goodness he hath shewn to us: for we are more sensible of those streams of goodness that flow from him, than of the fountain of goodness that is in him. We cannot see how good he is in himself, but we daily see how good he is to us: and it is our eye principally that affects our heart; so that though we are to love him principally for what he is in himself, yet the best means to raise up our affections, so as to love him for what he is in himself, is the consideration of the manifold expressions of his love to us.

Secondly, THE scripture doth give us sufficient warrant to love him for what he doth for us, as well as for what he is in himself, though we are still principally to love him, for what he is in himself, rather than for what he is to us.

GIVE me leave to instance in these three or four places.

First, *I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my prayer*, Psal. cxvi. 1. this was the reason why he loved God's person, because God had heard his prayer.

Secondly, *WE love him because he first loved us*, 1 John iv. 19. Not only we love him, because he deserves love from us; but we love him, because he first loved us: therefore because he loves us, therefore we do love him; and therefore, the consideration of his love to us is one reason of our love to him.

Thirdly, *HER sins be forgiven, therefore she loved much*, Luke vii. 47. For, tho' we read, indeed, *for she loved much*, yet the other seems to be the truer exposition of them. For the Greek word *ὅτι* will well bear that sense, and the scope of the place will scarce admit of any other; for our saviour is here giving the reason why

Mary

Mary had expressed so much love to him, even because he had expressed so much love to her, in the forgiving of her sins. He did not therefore forgive her her many sins, because she loved much; but, therefore, she loved much, because he had forgiven her so many sins. And indeed the antithesis in the same verse requires this interpretation, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little; which antithesis plainly implies the foregoing thesis to be, he to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much, not he that loveth much to the same much is forgiven. And indeed the analogy of faith requires it too; for God doth not pardon our sins because we love him, but rather we love him, because he pardons our sins. But,

Fourthly, THAT we may love God for his goodness to us, is plain from the words of my text too, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*; so that we are not only to love him as he is the Lord, but as he is our God; *thou shalt love the Lord*, that implies that we must love him for what he is in himself; *thou shalt love the Lord thy God*, that denotes that we are to love him for what he is to us.

WELL then; seeing we may love the Lord for what he hath done for us, let us a little consider with ourselves what it is he has done for us, for which we should thus love him. And whilst I shall speak of the love of God, let your hearts be enflamed with love to him: as one candle lights another, so let the flames of love in God to you light the like flames of love in you to him. Consider,

1st, IT was God that raised thee out of nothing; had he not made thee thou hadst not been: alas! from all eternity thou wast nothing, and hadst been so still, had not he caused thee to spring up like a tender bud, testifying from whence thou camest, and upon whom thou dependest, by thy inability to help thyself; had not he raised thee out of the bed of nothing, thou hadst, to this moment, lain sleeping in it, not knowing any, nor known by any; and what should move God to put forth his everlasting arms, and bring thee out of this barren womb? was it because thou lovedst him? poor creature! thou who wast not, how couldst thou love? or, if thou hadst loved any thing, certainly nothing less than him, who was infinitely contrary, yea, contradictory to thine eternal nothingness. Yet, though thou couldst not love him, yet he could, and did love thee; yea, he so loved thee that hadst no being, that he gave thee a being, wherein to love himself: a being, I say, not that of plants or brutes, but he endowed thee with a rational soul, upon the face whereof he stamped his own image, giving thee an understanding whereby to know him, a will whereby to chuse him, affections whereby to love him, that gave them all unto thee. So that as if he had not made thee thou couldst have been nothing; so unless he had enabled thee thou couldst never have loved any thing. It was he that gave thee that very affection of love, which thou now ungratefully placest upon other things more than him. Had not he given thee that passion, thou couldst not have loved any thing: how much then art thou bound to love God more than every thing, seeing without him thou couldst have loved nothing. Oh then remember, God loved you before you was, do you love God now you are; and seeing he so loved you as to give you beings, do you so love him as to improve your beings for him.

3dly. As he raised you out of nothing, so it is he that still keeps you in your beings. It was he alone that did create you; and it is he alone that can preserve you. So that thou art as unable to keep thyself from falling down from thy being unto nothing now, as thou wast to raise thyself from nothing unto a being before. As he made all things by the power of his word, so it is he that *upholds all things by the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3. Had not he put his everlasting arms under thee, thou hadst never risen up from nothing; and should he take away his everlasting arms from thee, thou wouldst again fall down to nothing: so that every moment of thy life is a monument of his love; neither is it he only that upholdeth thee, but it is he that continues all the faculties of thy soul, and members of thy body. It is he by whom thou knowest any thing, by whom thou willest any thing, by whom thou desirest any thing, by whom thou enjoyest any thing, and by whom thou lovest any thing. Thou couldst have had nothing to love, unless he had given it thee. neither couldst thou love it now thou hast it, unless he enabled thee. Oh then how infinitely art thou engaged to love him above all things, without whom thou couldst neither have any thing to love, nor love any thing thou hast; without whom neither thou that lovest it, nor the thing thou lovest, could continue one moment in its being?

3dly, As it is he that preserves you in your beings, so it is he that protects you from evil; without him thou couldst not but fall down to nothing, and without him

him all evil would fall down upon thee: it is he alone who gives good things to thee, and it is he alone who withholdeth evils from thee. Oh how many unseen dangers doth he continually keep us from? how often had that roaring lion, the devil, before now devoured us, had not the lion of the tribe of *Judah* rescued us? how oft have we been upon the brink of ruin, but that it was God that kept us from falling in? how art thou engaged to God for every good thing thou hast, and for every evil thing thou hast not? It is of his mercy that thou art preserved, and it is of his mercy that thou art not consumed: unless he had loved thee more than thou lovest him, there is nothing that is good but would have been kept from thee, there is nothing that is evil but would have been thrown upon thee. It is only from him that thou art here, and not upon thy sick bed; here, and not in prison; yea, here and not in hell: neither is it he only that defends thee from temporal, but from spiritual evils; for without God, as there is no misery but would fall upon thee, so there is no sin but thou wouldst fall into. Art thou not a murderer? art thou not an adulterer? art thou not a drunkard? art thou not a thief? yea, art thou not a blasphemer? art thou not an atheist? not to thyself, not to thyself, but to the name of God give the praise and glory. For as it's only God's constraining grace that enableth thee to do the good thou dost, so it is only God's restraining grace that prevents thee from doing the evil thou dost not. And therefore thou art bound to love God, both for what thou art, and for what thou art not; for what thou dost, and for what thou dost not.

4thly, It is he also that directs thee in all thy ways, and prospers thee in thy undertakings. *It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, Jer. x. 23. no, it is God only that directs our steps for us. When thou art in doubts and perplexities, and knowest not which way to take, it is God that is a voice behind thee, saying, *this is the way, walk in it*; it is he that enlightens thy understanding, quickens thy apprehensions, and directs thy thoughts, ordering the spirits in thy brain, that those may occur which are most advantageous and beneficial. If thou beest rich, it was he that directed thee to the means thou wert to use, and then prospered thee in the using of them. And whatsoever thy condition now be, the whole chain of causes, and series of providences, that hath brought thee from thy mother's womb unto what thou art, was ranged and managed only by his almighty power; so that thou art nothing, thou dost nothing, thou hast nothing, but what thou art beholden for. It is by thy labour and industry that thou hast gotten thy estate? Who was it that made thee thus laborious and industrious, but God? it is by thy gifts and parts that thou art advanced to preferments? Who was it that gave thee those gifts and parts, but God? Hast thou great friends and many lovers in the world? Who was it that made them thy friends and lovers, but God? It was he that gave *Joseph* favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison, *Gen. xxxix. 21*. It was he that brought *Daniel* into favour and love with the prince of the Eunuchs, *Dan. i. 9*. So that as without him we could not love others, so without him others would not love us. And therefore, the more others love thee, the more thou art bound to love God.

5thly, As if all this was nothing, God, to manifest himself still further to thee, came down from his blessed throne, cloathed himself with flesh, became subject to his own creatures, yea, and unto death itself, and all to redeem thee from it. Oh glorious condescension! Oh ravishing expression of divine love! that eternity should stoop to time, heaven come down to earth, glory be wrap'd in misery; that God himself should become man, and all to reconcile man to himself. *Oh what is man, that thou shouldst be thus mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldst be thus merciful to him!* Who are we, or what was our father's house, that God himself should not only become man, but suffer for us, and undergo cruelties, reproaches, and stripes from those that could not lay them upon him, did not he at the same time enable them! that he should be condemned by such as could not pronounce the sentence against him, did not himself vouchsafe them breath to do it! yea, that he should suffer death from them that borrowed their lives from him? Oh how can you think of these things, and keep your hearts within your breasts? how are we able to consider how much God hath done for us, and not burn in love to him? Oh ye that love yourselves, your sins, your lusts, your friends, your lives, or any thing more than God, behold the most high himself mocked, despised, spit upon, crowned with thorns, drinking gall and vinegar, and last of all undergoing the pangs of death, and all to redeem you to the joys of love! Consider, I say, these things, and then

then tell me, whether he doth not infinitely deserve your love more than the things that have it? Consider that he assumed thy nature, that thou mightest partake of his; he became the son of man, that thou mightest become the son of God; he hungered, that he might feed thee with his own flesh; and thirsted, that he might give thee to drink of his own blood; he was apprehended, that thou mightest be secure; derided, that thou mightest be honoured; condemned, that thou mightest be absolved; and crowned with thorns here, that thou mightest be crowned with glory hereafter: he came from heaven to earth, that thou mightest go from earth to heaven: yea, *he that knew no sin was made sin for us, that we that know nothing but sin might be made the righteousness of God in him*: he who was innocent was punished, that thou who art guilty mightest be pardoned; he was crucified, that thou mightest be glorified; he who had lived in heaven from eternity came and died on earth in time, that we who die on earth in time might go and live in heaven to eternity. Oh, how canst thou muse of these things, and the fire not burn within thee? where is thy heart, that thou dost not throw it all on flames with love, at the foot of that God, that hath done so much for thee?

6thly, HE did not only come down once to die for thee, but he is still pleased to come down and live within thee; he did not only assume our human, but we partake of his divine nature. And if it be an honour, for the king to remove a subject to his court, what an honour is it to remove his court to his subject? If it be an honour for God to take us up to live with him, oh what an honour is it for him to come down and live in us? yet this honour have all his saints: *know ye not, saith the apostle, that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you*, 1 Cor. iii. 16. Oh what an expression of love can you desire more from God, or God bestow more on you? But tell me, my brethren, seeing he that inhabits eternity, vouchsafeth also to come and dwell in you, what can you do less than receive him into the uppermost corner of your hearts, and entertain him with the choicest of your affections? seeing he is pleased to live in you, how can you forbear loving of him?

7thly, CONSIDER further what God hath laid up for you in heaven, as well as what he hath vouchsafed to you on earth. His mercies upon earth are infinitely more than you do deserve, but the glory he hath prepared for you in heaven is infinitely greater than you can imagine; *for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. So that the delights of heaven shall not only be greater than we as yet enjoy, but higher than we as yet can fancy; and therefore expect not that I should describe them to you: for was I able to describe them, they would be infinitely less than they are; no, all that I can tell you of them is, that they are greater than I am able to tell you of: only this we know, that those joys of heaven will as much transcend our expectations, as the pleasures upon earth deceive them; for there certainly we shall have infinitely more than we can here desire, yea, there we shall enjoy more happiness than here we are capable of; for our capacities shall there be enlarged as well as filled: so that we shall be capable of enjoying more, as well as enjoy as much as we are capable of. Oh my brethren, you that like worms are still creeping and crawling upon earth, conversing with nothing but dust and clay, you little think of the joys that they are transported with, who are admitted into the court of heaven, and made partakers of those transcendent glories; you little think what it is to see God face to face, and to bathe yourselves in those rivers of pleasure, which are at his right hand for evermore. Would the great God be pleased to open you a casement into this glorious palace, and give your souls but the least glimpse of these ravishing delightful glories, I dare say you would be a thousand times more desirous of heaven than ever you were of any thing upon earth; you would even melt away into holy longings, and thirstings, and pantings after those things, which as yet you slight and disregard. And verily, for all the low undervaluing thoughts you have as yet of heaven, so as to prefer the seeming pleasures upon earth before it, assure yourselves, if God shall be ever pleased to bring you to it, you will be of another mind. Nay, let me tell you, you must be of another mind before you are ever likely to come there, much more when you shall once be possess'd of the actual enjoyment of those transcendent glories, which I am as unable to express, as desirous

to enjoy, you'll then think the highest of your affections infinitely too low for that God, who hath provided such mansions for you.

8thly, If thy frozen heart be not as yet dissolved into love and affection to the great God, for these wonderful expressions of his love to thee; consider his ends in all these things: alas! he aims at nothing in all this for himself, but all for thee. It is he only that does the work, but it is we only that receive the gains: for before the world or any part of it had a being, God was brim-full of glory, infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, being all joy and bliss, all honour and glory, yea, all things desirable to himself: so that before he had made his creatures, he stood in no need of them; and now he hath made them, he is never the better for them; he was infinitely happy in himself before, and cannot be more happy in us now. Neither did he make creatures out of any such design, to be any thing advanced in his happiness by them, or to receive any accessions of glory from them, but merely out of his own essential goodness, which is naturally communicative of itself, even as the sun is naturally diffusive of its light, though he get nothing by it. And therefore, whether thou beest damned he is not the worse, or whether thou beest saved he is not the better for it. But howsoever, out of his own intrinsic goodness, he hath made thee, and upon the same account is desirous to make thee happy; and if thou acceptest of the overtures of grace he makes thee, it is thou that receivest the happiness, not he. It is true, he is the good husbandman that breaks up the fallow ground of thy heart, and sows the seed of grace in it: it is he also that waters, and weeds, and dresseth it, and causeth it to spring up and flourish; but when all is done, it is thou only that reapest and receivest the whole crop of glory from it. And therefore thou must not think that he hath any ends in loving thee; he only loves thee, because he loves thee, *Deut. vii. 8.* and now that he calls upon thee to love him, it is not because he wants thy love, but because thyself wanteth it: for it is no addition to his glory, but it is the perfection of thine to love him with all thy heart. Oh, how art thou able to consider these things, and not be forced to cry out with the spouse in the *Canticles*, *stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love*, *Cantic. ii. 5.*

Secondly, NEITHER doth God only deserve your love because he hath been so loving unto you, but more especially because he is infinitely lovely in himself. And certainly, tho' God doth give us leave to love him for these astonishing instances of his goodness to us, yet he requires us especially to love him for that bottomless ocean of goodness that is in himself. And verily, for all the low apprehensions that we may have of the eternal deity, did it but please the most high God to open our eyes, and shew us that glory that shines round about us at this time, how should we all lie groveling in the dust before him, and our souls be melted into holy desires and pantings after him?

WHEN the *Syrians* came to *Dothan*, the servant of the prophet *Elisha* could see nothing but the chariots, and horses, and hosts of the *Syrians*: but when God had opened his eyes, *behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha*, *2 Kings vi. 17.* So here you look about you from place to place, but can see nothing but your fellow creatures about you. But if God would be pleased but to open your eyes, as he did the servant of *Elisha's*, *behold the place is full of horses and chariots of fire*, yea, it is full of the glory of the great God; whom, if we could but see, how would our hearts be even snatched from us, and our souls transported wholly into the flames of love? and though these ravishments of love, from the sight of God, may seem paradoxes and mysteries to deluded mortals; yet certainly, could you and I but look upon this glorious object with the same eyes wherewith *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, *Peter* and *Paul*, and the rest of the celestial hierarchy, do continually and at this very moment behold him, how should we all be raised beyond our former selves? how should we immediately throw our melted, ravished, enflamed hearts at the feet of such transcendent glory? certainly, did we thus behold him, we should be as much unable to keep off our affections from him, as now we are to draw them up unto him; and it would be as impossible, as it is unjust, to let any thing come into competition with him.

I KNOW

I KNOW you expect I should speak some thing in particular, in the praise of those amazing and enamouring perfections that are in God, which thus deserve the choicest of our affections from us; but verily you must excuse me, for I am conscious of myself, that my highest celebrations of them would be but as so many detractions from them. Only let me tell you this in general, if ever it shall please this the chiefest good to discover himself unto you, and display his glory before you, you'll find him to be the source of wisdom, the abyss of goodness, the rule of holiness, the very center of all perfections; one who doth not only possess infinite perfections, but one in whom every perfection is infinite; one so amiable, so desirable, so pure, so perfect, so altogether lovely, that had we no relation to him, had we received no expressions of love from him, yet his bare essence, his native excellencies, could not but make us ravished and enamoured with him; one so altogether lovely, that the glorified angels from the beginning of the world to this moment could see nothing, either in or out of him, to lessen their affections to him. Yea, one whom to behold, and love, and praise, will be our happiness for evermore; and therefore, one whom though thou shouldst sift and rack thy brains to eternity, to find out some exceptions against him, or or some excuse for thy with-holding thy affections from him, it would be impossible.

AND therefore, be it known unto you, that every soul amongst you that doth not love God above all things, therefore does it not, because he doth not know him. For as thou canst not love him, unless thou knowest him, thou couldst not but love him, if thou didst know him. Let not the deceitful world then cheat thee any longer of thy affections; but let him be the center who was the author of them: dote no longer upon these childish gewgaws, but fix thy love upon the chiefest good; and seeing he hath called for thy heart from thee, what canst thou do but throw it before him all open, all melted, all on fire, with love unto himself, without steeping back the least spark of love to any thing else, but only in subordination unto him. Raise up therefore thy affections to him, and fix thy love continually upon him, never give over heaving at thy heart, until thou hast gotten it up to him, who so infinitely deserves the choicest of thy affections, not only for those expressions of love, which he hath shewn to thee; but for those attractives of love, which are all concentred in himself.

S E R M O N C X L I.

Religion the Happiness of any People.

PSAL. cxliv. 15.

Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

THAT supreme and all-glorious being, which we call God, as he is the creator and preserver of all things, that issueth forth from himself continually both essence and existence to every thing that is, so he cannot but be acknowledged likewise to be the universal governour of the world, the first and supreme orderer, and disposer of all and every thing in it; for he being the cause of all causes, and the principle of all motion whatsoever, it is impossible that any thing should act or move without him; insomuch, that there is not the least thing imaginable can happen to any nation in general, or to any particular person in the world, but exactly according to his will and pleasure. Indeed the whole world is but one great empire or kingdom, whereof the Lord *Jehovah* is the sole king or monarch; he gives laws, administers justice, and manageth all the affairs in it, as he himself sees good: this kingdom of his, although it be but one entire monarchy, yet it is ordinarily divided into two parts or circles, the upper and the lower, the one called heaven, and the other earth. In heaven, the far greatest part of his kingdom, where his honour and majesty in a more peculiar manner resides, and keeps his court; there he hath myriads of angels, archangels, cherubims, seraphims, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, all subject to his supremacy and command; which some of them presuming to oppose, they were soon banished from that higher orb, and cast down into these lower regions of the world, where they have been ever since confined, and reserved for chains of darkness at the great day. And as many of the inhabitants of heaven, so, by their instigation, all the dwellers upon earth have rebelled against the universal monarch of the world, whereby they are become obnoxious to the severest penalties that his justice can inflict upon them: insomuch, that he might justly condemn them all to the same torments, that are prepared for the apostate angels, or, if he please, reduce them into nothing. Howsoever, out of his divine clemency, he still vouchsafed to continue them in their beings upon earth, for some considerable time, to see whether they will return to their allegiance to him or no; which that they might do, although he suffers them to walk in their own ways, nevertheless he never left *himself without witness* among them, *in that he did them good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness,* as the apostle argues, *Acts* xiv. 17. But their depraved natures being so mischievous and unruly, that they are prone to ruin and destroy each other; hence it hath pleased the most high God, by his allwise providence, to form them into several nations and societies of men, entrusting some one or more persons amongst them, with some of his own power and authority over them, that so he might restrain them from committing injuries and violence upon one another, by one or more taken from amongst themselves, and differing in nothing from them, but only in the exercise of that power and dominion over them, which God in his providence hath conferred upon them.

THUS

THUS far it pleaseth the supreme governour of the world to take care of all mankind, that they may live for the most part quietly and peaceably together, and without any disturbance or interruption from one another; contemplate his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness in the works of creation and providence, and by that means either be induced to admire, adore, and obey him that is the author of them, or else be rendered inexcusable before him. But besides this his general care and providence over all the nations upon earth, he hath always been pleased to express a particular respect and kindness to some people more than to others, so as, in a more appropriate and peculiar manner, both to stile and to manifest himself to be their God. And although all others are far more happy than they deserve to be in the enjoyment of these earthly comforts, which God in his general providence scatters promiscuously among them, yet they, who have the Lord in a more peculiar manner to be their God, cannot but be happy in a more peculiar manner than others are. This is that which the *Psalmist* in my text takes special notice of; for having been speaking of temporal blessings, he asserts in the former part of this verse, that they who enjoy them are in some sense happy; *happy*, saith he, *is that people that is in such a case*; viz. who flourish in all manner of outward peace and prosperity; such, saith he, are happy at least in the esteem of men, as the fathers generally interpret the words, following the *Greek* translation, that renders them by *εὐμαρίσαν τον λαόν*. They account those people happy that have such things as these, but then the *Psalmist* by way of correction adds, *happy are the people whose God is the Lord*; intimating, that they, who have the Lord to be their God, are happy in a more peculiar manner than others either are or can be.

IN speaking to which words, I suppose it superfluous to observe unto you, that the word *people*, the subject of this proposition, is not to be understood of any particular person or persons considered by themselves, or distinctly from others, but of a political body or society of men living together under the same civil government; for this you all know to be the common meaning and purport of the word both in the sacred and prophane writings. Neither shall I discourage your attention with any critical or metaphysical notions and speculations concerning that glorious person, here called *the Lord*, or *Jehovah*; only I would desire you, that whensoever you hear me mention that sacred name, you would still apprehend nothing less than the supreme being of the world signified by it. Him, that made, maintains, governs, and disposeth of all things, whether in heaven or earth, according to his own will and pleasure.

BUT there are three things necessary to be considered in order to the clear understanding of these words; first, in what sense any nation or people may be said to have the *Lord for their God*. Secondly, upon what account the Lord is pleased to be the God of some people in a more particular manner than of others. Thirdly, wherein they, who have the Lord for their God, are more happy than other people.

THE first of these is a question, which we are all very highly concerned to understand; for many people are very apt to talk and boast much of the Lord being their God, when in the mean while they know not what themselves mean by it; for it is certain, that the Lord is the God of all the world; he is *the God both of heaven and earth*, as *Ezra* stiles him, *cap. v. 11*. for all things were made by him, and all things subsist continually by him. And therefore, as he is the Lord of heaven, so is he called too *the God of the whole earth*, *Isa. liv. 5*. and by consequence, of all the people in it. But how then can he be said to be the God of one people more than of another?

IF we consult the *Jews*, who certainly were once a people that had the Lord for their God in the sense we are now speaking of, their opinion is, and always was, that there is a two-fold providence of God to be considered in the world; the one they call *השנחה נללית* the other *החנשה פרשית* that is, a general and a special providence. By his general providence they say, that although God takes notice of the actions of each nation, and of every person in it, that so he may recompense all men according to their doings, yet as to the government of such nations which he himself hath no particular relation to, as their God, that, they say, he doth not exercise immediately from himself, but by the ministry of angels whom he deposes as his vicegerents under him, to order and revenge them according to the course of natural causes, established at the creation of the world; by which means they are subject to the influences of the stars and planets, of which it is said, that *the Lord divided them to all the nations under the whole heaven*,

Deut. iv. 19. And all the world being anciently divided into seventy nations or provinces, the Lord, according to their opinion, set seventy angels over them, to be their lords and governours under him, which they therefore call *סנדרין שלמעלה* the *Sanhedrin* or Senate that is above: this opinion they grounded upon Deut. xxxii. 8. where it is said, *when the most high divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel*, which words *Jonathan* in his *Targum* or *Chaldee* paraphrase upon the place, interprets to this purpose, "that when the most high divided the world among the people that sprang of the sons of *Noah*, in the age when tongues were divided, at that time he divided the people of the world by lot among seventy angels, according to the number of the children of *Israel* which went down into *Egypt*, which were seventy, *Exod. i. 5.* so that from this time they say, the Lord, by reason of their sins, took no particular care of these nations, but left them the government of the angels, himself exercising no more than his general providence among them.

BUT as for his special providence, that they say was appropriated to the seed of *Abraham*, which the Lord was pleased to chuse for his own province or portion, to rule and govern them immediately by his own infinite wisdom and power, so as not to suffer any of the common angels to have any power over them, as they had over other nations, but to look to them himself, according to that of *Moses* speaking of *Israel*, *so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him*, Deut. xxxii. 12. Thence therefore they say, the Lord was in a peculiar manner the God of *Israel*, because he governed other nations only by his general, them by his special providence; he constituted the angels to be the Gods as they are called in scripture, or the governours of other nations, but he himself was the God or governour of *Israel*, whom he therefore called his own people.

THIS opinion of the *Jews*, as to the substitution of angels in the government of the nations upon earth, hath no certain foundation in scripture, though some of the fathers seem to have embraced it; but as to God's general and special providence, so far it is certainly true, that God hath always had a more especial care of some nations or people, than he hath had of others; as it is plain he had of the *Jews* all along in the *old testament*, who are therefore frequently called his *lot*, his *portion*, his *inheritance*, his *treasure*, his *סגולה* his *special* or *peculiar people*, because of that special and peculiar care he was pleas'd to take of them, doing far more for them than for any other nation in the world besides, as *Moses* declared to them, Deut. iv. 32, 34. Nay, it is observable that he had so great a care of his own more than for other people, that whilst he governed other nations only by his general providence, or the ordinary course of natural causes, for his people *Israel's* sake, he was oftentimes pleas'd to alter the very laws and course of nature. For their sakes he divided the waters of the *Red-sea*, and of *Jordan* too, that they might go through a-foot; for their sakes he broached the rocks, and dissolved the very flints into floods of water; for their sakes he caused it to rain manna for forty years together, to feed them in the deserts of *Arabia*; and all that while he suffered neither their cloaths nor their shoes to wax old; for their sakes he caused the sun to stand still, and the stars in their courses to fight against *Sisera*; for their sakes he commanded the walls of *Jericho* to fall down at the sound of trumpets, and the *Medianites* to sheath their swords in each others bowels. And many such extraordinary things he was pleas'd to do for his people *Israel*, which he never did for any other nation in the world; which clearly shews the particular kindness and respect which he had for them above all other people.

HENCE therefore it is, that although he be indeed the God of the whole world, yet he is frequently in scripture called in a peculiar manner the God of *Israel*. He is never called the God of *Edom*, the God of *Moab*, the God of *Greece* or *Persia*, or the God of any other people, but only of *Israel*. Whence also it is, that although as to his essence he be really every where alike, yet he is often said in an especial manner to dwell in *Sion* at *Jerusalem*, and amongst his people; which cannot possibly be understood of his essential presence only, for he dwelleth in all places, one as well as another; but it must of necessity be understood of his special presence, whereby he is present with them in a more especial manner than he is among other people. And if you should ask me, how it is possible that God's omnipresence should be thus determined to one place more than another? I answer, it is by his *Satellitium*, his retinue or guard of holy angels which continually attend upon him.

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Whithersoever he sends them, there he himself is said to be in a more peculiar manner present; as might easily be demonstrated from several places of scripture, where his special presence or residence is spoken of. And this his heavenly retinue always attending by his order upon those whom he chuseth for his own people, hence he is said to dwell amongst them in a more peculiar manner than he doth amongst other people.

Thus therefore you see how the Lord is said to be the God of one people more than of another, by taking a particular care of them, and vouchsafing his special or peculiar presence among them. In this sense *Theodore* understands these words of my text, *the people whose God is the Lord*, expounding them by, *λαόν ὑπὸ θεῷ προμηθέμενον*, the people whom God takes care of in a more special manner than he doth of other people; for by this means, although he be the God of all the world, yet seeing he manifesteth himself to be so by exerting his divine wisdom, power and goodness in their behalf, in a peculiar manner, he may be justly said in a peculiar manner to be their God, and they may be truly termed a people *whose God is the Lord*.

THE second question I propounded is, upon what account the Lord is pleased to be the God of some people in a more peculiar manner than of other? For the understanding of which, I shall lay down these propositions.

First, The Lord being of purer eyes than to behold evil, so soon as mankind had rebelled against him, and was become sinful and corrupt, he presently cast off that particular care which otherwise he would have taken of them; he left them (as we say) to the wide world, to shift for themselves as well as they could; but he would have no more to do with them, than only to maintain the established laws of nature by which they should subsist: by which means, not being able to help themselves, they all became subject, not only to the chances and misfortunes of this world, but likewise to perpetual misery and torment.

Secondly, HENCE the son of God, out of his infinite compassion to mankind, was pleas'd to intercede for them, to undertake to expiate their sins, and to see that at least a great part of them should return to their former obedience.

Thirdly, UPON this the most high God, for his son's sake, was pleased to condescend so far as to capitulate with mankind, and to enter into a covenant with them, that notwithstanding their former miscarriages, if they would now repent and turn unto him, he would still be their God, and take as much care of them as if they had never sinned.

Fourthly, THIS covenant was first entred into with *Adam*, and so with all mankind, which then was not only represented but contained in him: but the tenure of it being soon forgotten, by reason of the corruption of man's nature, God was pleased afterwards to ratifie and renew it again, not with all mankind in general, as he did at first, but in a particular manner with *Abraham* and his seed, of whom Christ, in whom the covenant was made, should be afterwards born; for to him God expressly said, *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee*, Gen. xvii. 7. This is the first place in all the scriptures wherein God promiseteth in expresse terms to be a God to any people. Afterwards indeed he often repeated the same thing by his prophets, saying, *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people*: but they were only as the transcripts of this covenant; this was the original copy, the first grant here made to *Abraham* and to his seed.

Fifthly, THE seed of *Abraham*, with whom this covenant was made, is to be understood in a double sense. First, His natural seed by his son *Isaac*, in that line from which Christ, the foundation of the covenant, should afterwards spring according to the flesh, and so by virtue of this covenant, all the children of *Israel*, the sons of *Isaac*, even the whole Jewish nation, were God's peculiar people, and the Lord their God in a peculiar manner above all the nations in the world besides. They were his flock that he took particular care of, whilst other nations were as wild beasts, wandring about in the woods and deserts, without having any shepherd or governour to look to them, as the Jews all along had. For the Lord, according to his promise, was their God; he kept, preserved, and governed them by his special providence all along, until by reason of their idolatries and rebellions he was forced to cast them off.

BUT besides this the natural seed of *Abraham* according to the flesh, this promise was made likewise to his seed according to the faith; that is, to all such

as believed in God, as *Abraham* did : for *they which are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham*, so saith the apostle, *Gal. iii. 7.* From whence it is plain, that they who are of the faith, that is, who sincerely believe in Christ, so as to come up to the terms propounded in this general covenant, they also are reckoned as *Abraham's seed*, and comprehended in this covenant, wherein the Lord promised to be a God to him, and to his seed after him; for all such are Christ's true disciples; and if they be Christ's, then are they *Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to promise, *Gal. iii. 29.* that is, according to the promise he made to *Abraham*, and to his seed; not only to such as should proceed from him by natural propagation, but to such likewise, as by the faith of Christ would be adopted into his family, and so inherit the same promise, whatsoever people or nation they were of; by which means, although God's antient people the *Jews* be now disinherited, he hath still a peculiar people in the world who have the Lord for their God, by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, in whom this covenant was first made, and with whose blood it is seal'd and confirm'd to them.

BUT now they, who have the Lord to be their God, are not confined as formerly to any one particular nation; but in every nation, he that feareth the Lord, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him, *Acts x. 35.* And whatsoever nation or people in the world doth sincerely profess the faith of Christ, and obey his gospel, and duly perform that worship and homage which they owe to God, that nation he takes particular care of: as they are his people to serve and honour him, so he is their God to rule and govern them; so that he now saith to all people, as he said once to *Israel*, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, *Exod. xix. 5.* Yea, although the greatest part of any nation be refractory and debauched, yet if the true religion be but established, and real piety encouraged in it, and if there be but any considerable number of persons in it that truly fear and obey God, for their sakes he will take special care of the whole nation where they live, that they may be provided of all things necessary for life and godliness: for so it was oftentimes with the *Jewish* nation, insomuch that the prophet *Elijah* knew of none in his time but himself that worshipped the true God; and amongst the many hundred thousands that were then in the land, God himself could reckon but seven thousand souls that had not bowed the knee to *Baal*; yet for all that he was still pleased to continue his special providence and care over them: neither did he ever cast them off so long as there were any remnant of the election of grace amongst them, as the apostle argues, *Rom. xi. 5.* But when once they totally revolted from him, and utterly refused the overtures of grace that he made them in the gospel of Christ, then he presently cast them off, and called them *lo ammi*, they are none of my people, nor I their God; from whence it plainly appears upon what account the Lord is the God of any people. Even if any people or nation sincerely endeavour to serve, honour, and obey him, then he for Christ Jesus sake is pleased to accept of as his own peculiar people, so as to stile himself, and to be in a peculiar manner, their God.

AND so I come to the last thing I promised to shew, even wherein the people, whose God is the Lord, are an happy people, happy in a peculiar manner above other people. The question is not, whether they be happy or no? for that I suppose none here present can make any question of; but wherein it is, that this their peculiar happiness doth principally consist. What, are they greater, or richer, or more victorious than other people? no, their happiness is of another and a far higher nature, consisting in nothing less than in having the Lord himself, the supreme governour of the world, to take care of them, and to provide all things needful for them; so that whilst other people are subject to the various changes and chances of this deceitful world, they are sure never to want any thing that is really good for them, nor yet to have any real evil to befall them; for all the infinite and divine perfections of God himself are jointly engaged for their good and welfare: they have his wisdom to instruct them; his power to protect them; his mercy to pardon them; his grace to adorn them here; and his glory to crown them for ever; and all because they have the Lord himself for their God; not only for their light, their life, their hope, their help, their strength, their tower, their sun, their shield, and their exceeding great reward, but for their God; which is infinitely more than can be couched under any other expression whatsoever. What can those persons lack who are thus related to, and interested in him that

nation or people in general, the proper subject of our discourse, if they have the Lord for their God, what can he not do for them that he will? and what will he not do for them that he can? Consider but his people *Israel*, what care did he take of them wheresoever they were? consider them in *Egypt*, where he had brought them into bondage, the better to fit them for himself, what signs and wonders did he there work for their redemption? such as *Pharoah* himself could not but acknowledge to be done by the finger of God, that is, by his special providence and extraordinary power: consider them in the *Red-sea*, there you may see the waters recoiling back to make way for them, and as soon as they were out, returning again to overwhelm their enemies: consider them in the wilderness, there you may see the Lord himself marching before them in a pillar of a cloud by day, and of fire by night, to direct them in the way to *Canaan*: consider them in the land of *Canaan*, how triumphantly did they march there from place to place? no city, no king, no nation or people whatsoever, being able to stand before them. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, he suffered no man to do them wrong, yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, *touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm*, Psal. cv. 15. such a tender care had he always over his own people: consider them in *Babylon*, whether he in mercy brought them to humble them for their sins, even there he was mindful of them, and the day which was designed for their destruction, he miraculously turn'd it into a day of joy and feasting to them, which they ever after kept by the name of *Purim*; and when the time of their deliverance was come, how strangely did he incline the heart of that very prince, whose captives they were, to send them home again to rebuild their temples and city! Indeed the expressions of his particular kindnesses and favour for *Israel* were so great, so many, and so evident unto all, that none can read their histories but must needs acknowledge, that God had a greater care of them than he had of any other, or all the nations in the world besides; especially considering, that they were the only people who were entrusted with the oracles of God: they were the only people to whom God sent his prophets to instruct them in the way of heaven: they were the only people that had their sacrifices to expiate their sins, and their sacraments to confirm their faith: in a word, they were the only people to whom God was pleased to manifest himself, to reveal his will, to foretel the Messiah, and to direct them in the path that leads to everlasting life; and all, because they were his people, and he their God. How well then might the psalmist say, *happy is the people whose God is the Lord*; or as he doth elsewhere, *blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance*, Psal. xxxiii. 12.

BUT then you'll say, what is all this to us? what? it is certainly a matter of the greatest consequence that it is possible for me to preach, or you to hear of upon this occasion: for all you who are here assembled, profess and believe yourselves to be in the number of God's people, of such a people whose God is the Lord, and blessed be his great name for it, we have all just ground to believe it, from those clear and undoubted testimonies, which the most high God hath given of his particular care and providence over this nation to which we belong, as much, if not much more than over any other nation in the world, the *Jewish* itself not at all excepted. For his deliverance of this nation from the yoke and servitude of *Rome*, was certainly as great a favour, as special a kindness, as his redemption of *Israel* from the *Egyptian* bondage. Our fifth of *November*, is every whit as remarkable a day, as their feast of *Purim*; and the restoration of our king to his throne, and of our church to its primitive constitution, was as high and clear an instance of God's special providence, as the restitution of the *Jewish* church and state was from the *Babylonish* captivity. Indeed this one miraculous act of divine providence duly considered, with all the circumstances of it, is of itself sufficient to convince the most obstinate *Jew* in the world, as it hath done some, that the Lord hath manifested himself to be the God of this nation, as really as ever he was of the *Jewish*, especially considering that this nation hath long enjoyed as great, if not far greater spiritual privileges than ever the *Jews* had. Did the Lord select them from other nations, to make known himself, his law, and the way of salvation to them? hath he not done the same for us? How many nations are there in the world, who to this day know nothing of God or Christ, whilst we have all the mysteries both of the law and gospel revealed to us? Had they the sacraments of circumcision, and the paschal lamb? we have the sacraments of

baptism and the Lord's Supper, of which they were but types and shadows. Had they their priests, their altars, and their sacrifices for the expiation of their sins? We have them all and infinitely more in Christ, who once offered up himself, and is always making atonement for us. Had they their prophets to acquaint them with God's will, and the way to happiness? We have all their prophets, and more, and greater too, even Christ, his apostles and ministers, to shew us the way to everlasting bliss. What shall I say more? there is scarce any thing that the *Jews* ever had, as God's peculiar people, but what *England* at this day enjoys in a more peculiar manner than they ever did.

AND as it hath hitherto pleased the most high God, to be the God of this nation in general, so hath he been to the metropolis of it, this city, in particular, not only in that you partake of all the special privileges which the whole nation is invested with, but chiefly because the people of this city have had particular instances of God's special providence peculiar to themselves; for God's special providence, you must know, is seen in the extraordinary judgments that he lays upon a people, as well as in the extraordinary mercies that he vouchsafes unto them. As no people ever enjoyed such blessings as the *Jews* had, so no people under heaven were so severely punished for their sins in this world as they were; and if you ask me the reason, it was because of that particular cognizance and care that God took of them, as he himself intimates unto them, saying, *you only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities*, Amos iii. 2. And are not you all sensible that the immediate hand of God hath been upon this city? Did God ever deal so with any city as he hath done with this, both as to his judgments upon it, and mercies towards it? Was ever city consumed by such a fire, and raised again in so short a time, as this hath been? I am sure all the records of former times are not able to parallel or equal it in either; so that this city may be justly called now, as *Jerusalem* antiently was, the city of the living God, and the inhabitants thereof, a people whose God is the Lord.

AND if so, what more necessary caution or admonition can be given to you the governours and representatives of this city here assembled, than that you be truly thankful to the most high God, for that particular care he is pleas'd to take of you, and that you take heed lest he cast you off, as he hath done *Jerusalem*, and his antient people the *Jews*: they once were as you now are, the happiest people in the world, have a care lest you become as they now are, a people forsaken of God, and the common derision of mankind: and let me tell you, you have but too much cause to fear it; the pride, the oppression, the contempt of God, the slighting of his publick worship, the manifold heresies, schisms, and divisions that are so rife amongst you, threaten you severely with it; for the reigning of these and such like sins amongst you, is both the cause, and the sign of God's displeasure against you, and if they still continue with you, I fear, you'll soon find God to retire himself, and withdraw his special providence from you; for he was never so fond of any people, but if they refused to worship and obey him, he would refuse to protect and provide for them. If you will not be his people, he will not be your God; and therefore be advised to look to yourselves, and beware of every thing that you know to be offensive and displeasing unto God, lest otherwise you become as *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, an astonishment and an hissing to all the world. God hath threatned you sufficiently already; it is not long since the far greatest part of your city lay in its ashes; and if you will not take warning by what you have already felt, he hath a thousand times greater judgments still behind, and that is, to remove his candlesticks, and his special presence from among you, and to reject you utterly from being his people or inheritance, which he certainly will do e'er long, unless you prevent it by your timely repentance and reformation; for there are such crying sins in this city, for which God can never endure it long, nor delight to dwell in it, except it be amended. I shall not undertake to name them all, but I will mind you only of some few of those many sins which highly dishonour, and, by consequence, provoke the eternal God to remove you out of his sight.

FIRST therefore, how can you expect that he should continue to dwell amongst you, if you cannot afford him so much as convenient and decent places for his peculiar residence, but whilst yourselves live in cieled houses, his publick worship must be, for the most part, performed in sheds and tabernacles? Is this the thanks you give unto the Lord for the particular care he hath taken of you?

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or, is this the way to prevail with him to continue his special providence over you? No, mistake not yourselves: read but the first chapter of the prophecy of *Haggai*, and there you will find that God would never bless or prosper his own people, but blow upon their labours, and blast whatsoever they had got, so long as his own house lay waste. He would not manifest himself to be their God, nor dwell amongst them, until they had built him an house to dwell in, a place for the publick performance of their homage and devotions to him; and you'll find him in the same mind now, as he was then. Now he hath enabled you to rebuild your own houses, if you shall still neglect or delay to rebuild his, what can you expect but that he should cast you again into utter ruine and desolation? Indeed when I walk through the streets of the city, and view the famous halls, and stately fabricks that are erected in it, and so many churches still lying in their rubbish, I cannot but wonder within myself that the city hath stood so long as it hath done already since the rebuilding of it; until I berhink myself that God hath greater judgments to inflict upon it, than the demolishing of its houses, even the casting off its inhabitants from being his people any longer, seeing they have so little regard to his service and worship. And therefore look not upon the sumptuous buildings, erected either upon publick or private charges, look not upon them as any credit or ornament to the city, no, they are, and will be its shame, reproach, and infamy, so long as any one church remains unbuilt. I am sure they are reckoned so by all truly sober, and pious persons, both of this and of other nations; for in plain terms, it argues that you take more care for the world, than you do for God: but if you thus continue to be so regardless of him, and his service, he will soon leave off to take care of your good and welfare.

BUT why do I speak so much of places to worship God in, when for ought I see there are but few that care whether they worship God or no, or at least not how they do it. How many are there amongst you, who disdain so much as to own or acknowledge God in publick, and think they worship God best, when they express the least reverence or respect unto him? which is such a kind of worship that the world never heard of till our days, and God I am sure can never be pleased with it: neither are they the only persons guilty of this crime: look into our publick congregations themselves, how rare is it to find one that worships God with reverence and godly fear, as we are expressly commanded to do? how careless and indifferent are men now grown in divine service, as if it was a matter of no consequence or importance at all? but hath not the Lord said, *I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh unto me*, that is, all that approach my divine majesty and presence, shall testify their acknowledgments of my power and supremacy over them? how then can you be said to sanctify or worship the Lord of hosts, when you can sit as confidently before him, and speak as malapertly to him, as if he was your fellow-creature? yet this is all the worship that the Lord hath commonly among us. But if you will not worship him for the future with more fear and reverence, with more solemnity and devotion than heretofore you have done, he will soon find himself another people that shall.

MOREOVER, what more common amongst us, than with those filthy dreamers which the apostle *Jude* speaks of, to despise dominion and speak evil of dignities? A disease which being contracted in the late rebellion, hath now overspread the whole nation, but hath infected no part of it so much as this city; where, in their ordinary discourse, men stick not to reproach and defame those whom the Lord their God hath by his special providence deputed to exercise power and authority over them: but this is such a sin, that doth not only directly thwart God's law, but strikes at his very person: for what is done to his deputies, God accounts as done unto him. As when the *Israelites* spoke against *Samuel's* government, God saith expressly to him, *they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them*; especially those who are God's peculiar people, they having the Lord himself, the supreme governour of the world, for their God; he hath a particular hand in the election and constitution of their civil as well as of their ecclesiastical magistrates, ordering all their publick affairs by his own special providence; and therefore if they offer to resist, contemn, or defame those whom he hath set over them, he looks upon himself and his own special providence as resisted, contemned and defamed by them. And what if there should any real misdemeanors happen in the government of the city, you must not blame your governors, but yourselves for it: it is your own fault; you have offended and dis-

pleased

pleased your God, otherwise he would have inclined their hearts, and ordered their thoughts, their counsels, and their resolutions so, as would have been most for your advantage; for *the heart of the king, and so of every governour, is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will*, Prov. xxi. 1. especially where he is pleased in a peculiar manner to be the God of any people, as he is to you, he over-rules all the counsels, and takes particular care of all the publick affairs there, so that you may be confident nothing can happen to you, but by his especial providence, whereof his magistrates are but the instruments to convey it to you, and therefore you cannot despise them, but you must needs despise it too; which if you do, he will soon withdraw it from you, and be no longer your God.

THERE are many other sins too common among us, as blaspheming of God's name, profanation of his sabbath, neglecting of his publick ordinances, drunkenness, uncleanness, perjury, couzenage, oppression, and many others, too many to be here named; which may justly provoke God to forsake and cast us off from being any longer his peculiar people: which therefore that he may not do, as it concerns you all to avoid them, so in a particular manner it concerns you, whom the most high God is pleas'd to entrust with the government of this city, to use the utmost of your power and authority to restrain them. And verily you have both all the reason and encouragement in the world to do it, as considering from whom you receive your power, and for what end it is conferred upon you; for seeing the Lord *Jehovah* himself, of his infinite mercy in Jesus Christ, is pleased to be the God of this land, and of this city in a peculiar manner, the constitution of all its magistrates and governours must needs be acknowledged to belong immediately unto him; though the election of them be in the commonalty, he disposeth their hearts and affections so as to chuse whom he pleaseth; and seeing it is the most high God himself that investeth you with this power, you need not fear but whatsoever difficulties may occur, he will stand by you and assist you in the due execution of it. Be strong therefore, and of a good courage in defending your Lord and master's cause against his adversaries, even in suppressing all manner of vice and wickedness, and expelling it, if possible from amongst his people; which if we shall neglect to do, you'll bear the sword in vain, and frustrate the end of your constitution. For wherefore doth the Lord confer this power upon you, but that you should exercise it for himself, in giving vice its condign punishment, as well as virtue its just reward? for the apostle tells you, that you *are the ministers of God*, his revengers to execute *wrath upon them that do evil*, Rom. xiii. 4. This is the work that he hath put into your hands, and you act but under him in the doing of it. In his name therefore, and for his sake, set yourselves in good earnest upon the performance of this great trust that is committed to you, that so the Lord may still continue to be our God, and delight to dwell amongst us.

WHICH that he may do, let me also in his name beseech and advise you all in your several places, degrees and stations in the city, to endeavour to the utmost of your power to serve and please God: content not yourselves any longer with the bare profession of that excellent religion you are baptized into, but live up unto the practice of it: carry yourselves, and all you have, wholly to his service and honour; for that end, redress the evils before spoken of, provide yourselves places fit for so great, so holy, so divine a work, as the worshipping of your God, and therein perform your publick devotions to him with all manner of reverence and godly fear: let fraud and avarice, pride and luxury, be expelled from among you; and as for atheism and profaneness, irreligion and debauchery, let it not be so much as named amongst you. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; be ye loyal to your sovereign, submissive to your governours, and thankful for the care which under God they take of you; be you kind and helpful to one another, faithful to your friends, loving to your enemies, charitable to the poor, and just to all. Oh, that we might once see this city thus flourishing in all true piety and virtue, how happy should we then be? so happy as still to be a *people whose God is the Lord*.

WHICH God grant we may be, in, and through the merits of Jesus Christ, to whom with the father, and holy spirit, be all honour and glory, both now and for ever.

S E R M O N CXLII.

The Duty of thinking upon God.

PSAL. X. 4.

God is not in all his thoughts.

IF we consider man in his first estate, as he was design'd and created by the eternal God, we may justly admire at the excellency of his composure and endowments; all the powers and faculties of his soul being so contrived, that they ran exactly parallel in their finite capacities to that infinite perfection of God himself: so that he conceived of every thing as God conceives of it, understanding all things as far as his finite intellect could reach, as God understands them; willing only what he wills, loving what he loves, and rejoicing only in what he rejoiceth in. And though his soul was carried about in an earthly vehicle, yet it was no ways clogged or hindered, much less diverted or seduced by it, his body being perfectly subject to, and punctually observing and following the motions of his soul; his superiour and rational part exercising an entire dominion over the inferiour and sensitive appetite, so that there was a perfect harmony betwixt God and man, his image and similitude being exactly portrayed and stamped upon man, who by consequence was as pure, as holy, as wise, as good, as happy, every way as perfect as the angels themselves were, or any creature could possibly be.

BUT alas! where shall we now find such a man? no where certainly but in heaven: for all mankind upon earth are quite another thing, being all so strangely corrupted and depraved both in their principles and practices, that they are every whit as simple and wicked, as they were at first made to be wise and holy. How strangely are all the faculties of our souls altered from their primitive constitution? our understandings darkened, our judgments deceived, our consciences debauched, our wills perverted, our affections disordered, and, by consequence, all the motions and acts of our souls turned upside-down from what they were at first designed to be? our sensitive appetites domineering and lording it over reason, our flesh warring against the spirit, and subduing it too; so that, instead of being like to God and his holy angels, we are now degenerated into the likeness of the devils and impure spirits; so that generally we are become as proud, as envious, as unjust, as malicious, every way as wicked and sinful, as much averse from good and inclined to evil as the very fiends of hell themselves. Neither is it thus only with the more barbarous and savage part of mankind, that never had the oracles of God committed to them, nor the light of the gospel shining upon them as we have had, but even amongst ourselves, who have the scriptures, the sacraments, the ordinances of almighty God entrusted with us; who have his will and pleasure most clearly revealed unto us; who have the gospel of Christ continually sounding in our ears; yet what impiety towards God, what contempt of his word, what irreverence in his presence, what uncharitableness to the poor, what pride and avarice, what hypocrisy and censoriousness, what wickedness and debaucheries of all sorts are to be seen commonly amongst ourselves? insomuch, that we that pretend so much to know God, and enjoy the gospel, are for the most part as wicked and impious as they that never heard either of God or Gospel.

WHEN I thus consider sometimes seriously with myself the vast difference betwixt the primitive and degenerate estate of mankind, I cannot but wonder with myself, how it comes to pass that we, who were made so conformable to the laws and nature of the chiefest good, should now become not unlike only, but altogether contrary to what we were? as much averse from good and inclined to evil, as ever we were averse from evil and inclined to good; and this too, notwithstanding the clear knowledge that we have, or may have, of God himself, and our duty to him. And when I have searched and considered all things, I can find nothing which I can resolve this strange degeneracy of mankind so much into, as into their not thinking of God aright, as the great and principal cause of most of the actual sins which they indulge themselves in, and the chief reason too, why our actual sins are so often multiplied into habits; even because as *David* here saith, *God is not in all their thoughts*; so he here describes a wicked man, saying, *אין אלהים נל מוסתיו*, all his thoughts are, that there is no God; so these words may be expounded according to that other expression of the *Psalmist*, *the fool hath said in his heart there is no God*, *Psal. xiv. 1.* And therefore saith he there, *they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good*; but our translation seems to give the more proper interpretation of the words, *God is not in all his thoughts*: so the *Syriack* expressly renders them, *God is not in all of his thoughts*; with which the *Arabick* agrees in sense, translating them, *God is not before him*. And so the *Septuagint*, *καὶ ἐστὶ θεὸς ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν*, *God is never in his sight*: for *David* is here describing a wicked man, and saith, *he is such a one as through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God*; yea, that *God is not in all his thoughts*; that is, he never thinks of God, nor regards and minds him as he ought to do, but lives as without God in the world, as if he had neither God to serve, or soul to save; as if there were neither any hell to avoid, nor any heaven to enjoy: he never troubles his thoughts with God himself, nor with any thing that belongs to him. In speaking to which, I shall endeavour to shew, how it comes to pass that men generally think so little of God, and then, that this is both a sign that they are wicked men, and a great cause too why they are so; and, by consequence, how we ought to think of God aright, and why we must do so if we desire to be good or holy, and not wicked and sinful.

FIRST, I say, how doth it come to pass that men generally have not God in all their thoughts? A question something difficult to be resolved; for, all things considered, one would think it almost if not altogether impossible, that men should be able to forbear thinking of God, as considering that they live continually upon him, and have nothing but what he gives them: they cannot move, nor act, nor speak, or so much as think without him; and therefore, that God should not be in all their thoughts, notwithstanding all their thoughts proceed from him, this is such a paradox that we might justly suspect the truth of it, but that we see it so frequently verified by experience: and I suppose we need not go far for instances of this kind; there being too many, I fear, amongst ourselves, who can live, and move, and be a whole day together without ever so much as thinking of him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Yea, how many are there amongst us, that never set themselves seriously to think of God all their life long; that spend day after day, week after week, year after year, in thinking upon other things, without ever thinking upon him that gave the very power of thinking to them, and by whom alone we are enabled to think of any thing; for which absurd and most unreasonable practice no reason imaginable can be alledged, why it should be indulged and continued as it is: but, howsoever, why it is so, these reasons may be given.

First, BECAUSE, by the fall of our first parents, the understanding of mankind was so broken and distracted, that they lost the true idea, and those clear conceptions of God, which otherwise they would have retained; for if these had been continued sound and whole, men could not but have been always thinking upon God, by reason of the constant and uninterrupted happiness and delight, which they would have found in the contemplation of the divine perfections; which would have been always fully and clearly represented to them: but their understandings growing dark and obscure, so as not to be able to apprehend the transcendent glory, beauty, and excellencies of the divine nature; hence their thoughts were soon taken off from God, and scattered amongst his creatures, so that in the very first ages of the world, before the flood, *God saw that the wickedness of man was great*
upon

upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, Gen. vi. 5. that is, his thoughts, which ought always to have been fixed upon God, were continually roving about amongst those inferior and unlawful objects upon earth, and so were continually evil: so that mens thoughts being once taken off from God, they have ever since been mostly taken up with other things; neither can they ever be reduced to their proper center again, without a great deal of care and pains about them, our thoughts being now grown so short and narrow, that they cannot without a great difficulty be extended and enlarged, so as to apprehend and contemplate an incomprehensible being.

ANOTHER reason, why men generally spend their thoughts upon other things, so as seldom or never to think of God, is, because God is not so evident to sense, nor seems so present to us as other things do; for although really nothing is or can be so near unto us as God, because it is in him *that we live, move, and have our being*, Acts xvii. 28. yet he seems a great way off to our distracted and disturbed fancies, which are rarely touched or affected with any thing but what is conveyed through the senses to them, and so make some sensible impression upon them. And hence it is, that things here below, thus seeming nearer to us, and presenting themselves immediately to our senses, they are first and principally entertained in our thoughts, as constant guests, which we are so used to, that God himself and all spiritual objects are strangers to us, and we do not love to be often troubled with them, thinking ourselves more concerned about what is present, than about what is future; about what we see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, than about such things as are the objects only of our reason and understanding.

AND this suggests unto me another reason, why men generally do not think of God as they ought, even because they do not care for him; they have no real love and affection for him; and therefore it is, that they think so seldom of him. Our thoughts cannot but run upon what we truly love, as *David* said, *oh how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day*, Psal. cxix. 97. His affections being really towards it, his meditations could not but be always upon it: and the exceeding love which he had to God was the cause that God was the last out, and the first in his thoughts each day; yea, he was continually thinking of him, and that with *pleasure and delight*, Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18. And thus did you and I but really prefer God as in our settled judgments, so as to love him above all things else, we should not be able to forbear thinking and contemplating upon him, as the person whom our souls love. But the mischief is, men generally do not really love God with all their hearts and souls: they may love to speak of him, but they do not truly love him they speak of; and therefore it is that they care not to converse with him, nor to meditate seriously upon him. Did you but love God, as you pretend, you could not but think of him, as you ought: but he is not in all your affections, and that is the reason that he is not in all your thoughts; that is, he is in none of them, as that phrase implies.

BUT let me tell you, in the *second* place, that not to think upon God is an evident sign of a very wicked and naughty heart; it is one of the most notorious properties whereby *David* here describes a wicked man: *the wicked, saith he, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God, God is not in all his thoughts*. And indeed, what greater argument can there be in the world of a base, impure, degenerate, and sinful mind, than to be always plodding and contriving about such low and pitiful trifles as most men throw away their thoughts upon, and in the mean time neglecting the most high and mighty God, as if he was not worthy to be thought of or minded by us: ungrateful wretches that we are! that we should have nothing but what we receive from him, and yet should be so far from making any acknowledgment to him, that we should disdain so much as to think of him? what is, if this be not, a clear demonstration of the highest impiety and wickedness imaginable? For this it was, that the eternal God denounced that severe threatening, that he would inflict a marvellous unheard of punishment upon his people, because, though they honoured him with their lips, their hearts were far from him, *Isa.* xxix. 13. It is a wonderful sin, and therefore deserves a wonderful punishment; yea, he calls heaven and earth to witness against them for it, *Isa.* i. 2, 3, 4. And oh, that the same complaint might not be justly taken up against many here present, who can think of your trades, think of your estates, think of your relations, think of your earthly business, think of your
chapmen

chapmen and debtors, but can find neither time nor hearts to think of him to whom you are indebted for your lives, and all you have; that can employ your most serious thoughts upon some little earthly project for a whole hour, yea, a whole day together, without ever taking any notice of him that continually preserves you, as if he was not worthy to be regarded by you. Oh, dreadful impiety! what tongue is able to express, what heart is able to conceive the greatness, the horridness of this sin, than which nothing is more common among us, and yet nothing less minded or bewailed by us? but assure yourselves, whatsoever pretences you make to piety, whatsoever professions you make of religion, whatsoever graces or virtues you fancy yourselves to be adorned with, whatsoever duties and performances you seem to be constant and hearty in, so long as you delight not to retain God in your knowledge, nor to have him continually in your thoughts, you are still *in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity*; and have just cause to reckon yourselves amongst the most heinous and notorious sinners upon earth.

ESPECIALLY considering in the third place, that not thinking upon God is not only an infallible sign and mark of a wicked man, but it is the cause too that men are so wicked as they are, there being no wickedness whatsoever but is both contained in, and proceeds from, this one comprehensive and fertile sin. Did men seriously think of God as they ought to do, they would not dare to be so wicked, debauched, and hypocritical as they are generally; for the thoughts of God would damp all their pleasures, and so stop their career in sin, and give check to their most strong and prevalent corruptions. Was God but in all your thoughts; did you always apprehend him that made, preserves, and governs the world, to be always present with you, observing your motions, weighing your actions, displeas'd with every sin you commit, and resolved to be revenged of you for it, and that he will one day judge you according to what you do; such thoughts as these would soon make you weary of playing with sin, and turn your love unto it into hatred and detestation against it: as I shall endeavour to make plain by instancing in several particulars.

1. WHAT is the reason that there is so much atheism and unbelief in the world, but only that men do not think of God? did they but think of what he is, and what he hath done; did they but consider the words of his mouth rehearsed in scripture, and the works of his hands manifested in the creation of the universe; how he by his almighty word commanded all things out of nothing, and of his own essential goodness still continues all things in their being; did they but consider the infinite wisdom that appears in the contrivance of the world, the infinite power that was exerted in the production of it, and the infinite goodness that shines forth in the management and administration of it; did they, I say, but seriously think of, and consider these things, it would be so far impossible for them not to believe in God, that they could not but admire and worship him. It is only *the fool that saith in his heart there is no God*, Psal. xiv. 1. The fool, that is he that doth not rightly weigh and consider things as he ought to do. It is only such a one that is capable of falling into so great a sin as atheism and unbelief is.

2. WHAT is the reason that men generally have not the fear of God before their eyes? that they do not *sanctify the Lord of hosts, so as to make him their fear and their dread*? Isa. viii. 13. What is the reason of it? certainly nothing but this, *that God is not in all their thoughts*. For did you but often think how great and glorious, how just and powerful a God he is; how he governs and disposeth of all things in the world; that all the world to him is not so much as a drop of the bucket to the whole ocean; that there is nothing good but he can give it to you, nothing evil but he can lay it upon you; that you lie continually at his mercy, and are every moment subject to the strokes of his divine justice; did you, I say, but seriously lay these things to heart, would not you presently conclude it to be *a fearful thing indeed to fall into the hands of the living God*? Heb. x. 31. This is the reason that God himself gives, why men do not fear him, Jer. v. 21.

3. WHAT is the reason that men do not love God, as they ought to do, but are apt to disregard and undervalue him, but merely, because their thoughts are not fixed upon him as they ought? for did you exercise yourselves continually in meditating upon his perfections, in considering and thinking upon his infinite wisdom, beauty, goodness, mercy, grace, glory, eternity, and the rest of these lovely and enamouring properties, which are concentrated in his divine nature, your hearts would be even snatched from you, and your souls enflamed with the most ardent love

love and affection to him: as we see *David*, whose thoughts being always running upon God, his love was so intensely and strongly set upon him, that he was restless without him, longing and thirsting for nothing so much as to come into his presence, and enjoy his favour, *Psal. lxxiii. 25.* And did you but take the course to keep your hearts close to God, dwelling continually upon the contemplation of his divine perfections, your hearts by thus musing would soon wax hot within you, so as to burst out into flames of love to so excellent, so permanent, so altogether lovely a being as he is.

4. WHAT is the reason also, that men are so covetous and earthly minded, and, by consequence, that fraud, lying, oppression, rapine, perjury, and the like unlawful artifices of getting money, are so rife among us? What is the reason, I say, of all these sins, but that men do not think of God, and the account which they must one day give to him? for did you but think of God, you would love him; and did you love him, you could not possibly be so far in love with any thing else, as to displease him to gain it: did you fix your eyes continually upon him, they would be so dazzled with his amazing glory, and transcendent beauty, that all things else would seem but as darkness and deformity to you; the thoughts of God would soon thrust out and banish all thoughts of the world, and desire of riches from you; your great care would then be to please God, and as for other things you would trust in his word and promise for the supplying them, you having it under his own hand, *Matth. vi. 33.*

5. WHAT is the reason that men are so puffed up with the prosperity of this world, and so apt to be cast down with every trouble and affliction which befalls them? why, it is only for this reason, because they do not really think of God; for was he continually in your minds, you could not but be vile and base in your own eyes, for all the gay and fine things which you may fancy yourselves to be possessed of: alas! what would all the pride and grandeur, the wealth and gaiety of the world seem to you, who are always beholding, considering, and admiring, wisdom, majesty, glory, and perfection itself? And as you would not be lifted up with the prosperity, so neither would you be cast down with the adversities you meet with here below; always contemplating upon height and happiness itself, you would think nothing upon earth either high or low, no estate either happy or miserable, and so would laugh at calamity, and despise all temporal afflictions; so far from fainting under them, that you would rather embrace them with joy and thankfulness, as being the products of the divine wisdom, and the tokens of your heavenly father's love and kindness to you: it was this thinking of, and looking up to God and heaven, that kept up the apostles spirits in the midst of persecution, and enabled them to undergo martyrdom itself, with courage and rejoicing, *2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18.*

Lastly, WHAT is the reason that men generally slight prayer, or at least are very careless in the performance of it? the reason is clear enough, they do not think of God; for were their thoughts always taken up with him, they could not but take all opportunities of making their addresses to him. Were your hearts once used and accustomed to constant thinking upon God, you would never think yourselves well, but when you are praying to him, or, at least, some way or other conversing with him; it would then be as tedious and irksome a thing not to be praying, as now it is to pray; and with how much reverence and devotion would you pray, if you always considered whom you prayed to? so that if you either neglect praying altogether, or matter not how you do it, you may conclude, *that God is not in all your thoughts.*

THUS you see what great and heinous sins this one sin of not thinking upon God is the cause of, and opens a way to. The same may be said of all other sins; for it is impossible for you to avoid any wickedness whatsoever as ye ought to do, so long as *God is not in all your thoughts*; and therefore if you matter not how wicked you are, you may still forget the great God that made you; but if you desire not to be wicked, but holy, good, and pious men indeed, you must begin here; you must gather up all your scattered thoughts, and fix them only upon God, so as to make him the chief subject of your thoughts here, as you desire he should be the object of your happiness for ever.

BUT your presence here, at this time, commands me in charity to believe and hope, that you desire, at least, not to be wicked men, and, by consequence, to think of God for the future, without which you cannot but be wicked; and therefore,

by this time I hope you are not only the better prepared to understand the next question which I promised to speak to, but are likewise very desirous to have it explained unto you; and resolved, by the blessing and assistance of almighty God, to order yourselves and thoughts accordingly for the future. And I confess it is a question of more than ordinary moment, not easily understood, and much more difficult to be practised; and that is, how God is to be in all our thoughts, or, how we ought to think of God? and be not too hasty in thinking this to be a thing which you know well enough already, it is my hearty desire, that every soul here present, both knew what to do, and did what they knew in this matter; but I fear there are but very few amongst us that do either; for I would not have you mistake yourselves so much as to think, that every time you talk or discourse of God to others, or think, or say the word God within yourselves, that then you necessarily think of God; for though this be all the thinking of God, that people generally look after and take up with, yet really this is no thinking of God at all; for a man may talk of God, or read of God, yea, and pray to God too, all the day long, and yet not think of God at all as he ought to do, for thinking of God is quite another thing. There is a great art and mystery in it, which cannot be attained without taking a great deal of pains about it; for God is an infinite, incomprehensible being, and our thoughts at the highest are but finite; but notwithstanding they are of that quick, nimble, active, and extensive nature, that they can extend themselves so far, that although they cannot comprehend God as being without bounds and limits, yet they may, and ought to apprehend him to be incomprehensible: but for that end, it is necessary that they be stretched to the highest pitch, and extended as far as possible without being broken and distracted, or else they can never do it, else they can never reach so high and superexcellent a being as God is: but this is not so easy a matter for us to do, who ordinarily conversing with nothing but sensible and corporeal objects, cannot without a great deal of study and labour, raise up our hearts so high as to think, not only of an immaterial and spiritual, but an infinite and eternal being. Howsoever seeing it is so absolutely necessary, in order to our being holy here, and happy hereafter, that we often, if not always, be thinking upon God, I shall endeavour to explain this divine art unto you, and shew you how you may and ought to have God always in your thoughts; both which I shall acquaint you with in these following propositions.

First, In order to your thinking aright of God, you must be sure to use yourselves by degrees, to think of things which are above you, and of an higher nature than what you meet with upon earth; so long as you suffer yourselves to be always poring on such low and mean things, as earthly riches, popular applause, carnal pleasures, and the like, it is impossible you should think of so high and glorious a being as God is; for your thoughts being thus continually employed about such gross and heavy objects, themselves will degenerate into the nature of the objects they are employed about, and become gross and heavy too, always creeping all along upon earth, never able to raise themselves higher than these lower regions of the world, nor to stretch themselves further than the pitiful narrow things upon earth reach; and therefore it is in vain to think of thinking upon God, until your thoughts and affections too, be disentangled from the world, and your hearts hang loose and indifferent as to all things here below; that so your thoughts having no heavy clog upon them, may freely soar aloft in the open air, without taking any notice of any thing upon earth, still contemplating upon those far more glorious creatures which God hath made above, the sun, the moon, the stars; whereof the sun, by astronomical calculation, is computed to be three hundred thirty three times bigger than the earth; five millions and odd thousand miles distant from it; and yet how strangely doth it enlighten, heat, and influence every thing upon it. *Saturn*, the highest of the planets, is near forty eight millions of miles beyond the sun; and as for the fixed stars, they are so exceeding far off, that no astronomical observation ever was, or will be, able to reach their distance; and yet if the clouds do not interpose, they are all visible and apparent to us; so that we may conclude, the earth, in comparison of the world, not to be much more, if so much, as a drop to the whole ocean. And if we did but accustom ourselves to think of those higher and more glorious parts of the creation, they would be as so many steps whereby our thoughts might at length climb up to the highest and most glorious being of all, the creator himself. This was the means which *David* made use of to raise up his thoughts

to God : *When I consider*, saith he, *the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou shouldst visit him?* And this made him break forth into that lofty and divine expression of God, *Oh, Lord our Lord! how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens?* Psal. viii. 1.

Secondly. HAVING thus taken off your thoughts from the lower, and exercised them upon the more sublime parts of the creation, then, in order to your fixing them upon God, you must be sure to abstract them from all created beings whatsoever, so as not to suffer the idea or image of any creature whatsoever to remain in your minds; for if you do, it is impossible for you to frame any true conception of God, for he is infinitely above, and beyond all things in the world, and therefore the idea that represents any thing else, cannot possibly represent him to our minds; or if we fancy to ourselves that the image of any thing else represents God to us, we are so far from thinking or conceiving of God aright, that we do indeed infinitely disparage his glory and perfections, fancying them to be but like a finite creature, as all things in the world are besides himself. Hence God being jealous of his glory, expressly forbids us in the second commandment to make any image or representation of him whatsoever, *thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, &c.* and the reason he gives is, *because*, saith he, *the Lord thy God is a jealous God*; he is jealous lest we should fancy him like the image which we make of him, or worship the image instead of him. Hence also, in the most visible and glorious manifestation that he ever made of himself to the sons of men, upon mount *Sinai*, he then appeared to them under no image or similitude whatsoever, lest the people should afterwards conceive of him, or worship him under such an image or similitude. This *Moses* takes special notice of, saying, *and the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire; ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice*, Deut. iv. 12. And again, *take ye therefore good heed*, saith he, *unto yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude in the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire*, ver. 15. and then he gives the reason, why the Lord would not appear under any similitude, even lest they should make or frame any image of him to themselves, ver. 16, 17, 18. so that it seems they heard a voice indeed, but that is not a thing to be painted or engraven, it being not the object of the eye, but ear; yet this was the only way that God then manifested himself, representing himself under no image, likeness, or similitude whatsoever; and all, that we might think of him as he is, and not as any image can represent him to us. And therefore, for all the little excuses which the papists make for the worshipping of God by an image, I cannot imagine what they will answer for themselves when they come to his just tribunal, seeing they wilfully and pertinaciously act so directly contrary both to the words and scope of his commands: which they have therefore razed out of their catechisms and ordinary books of devotion, to blind the poor people, that they might not know that God ever commanded any such thing? who, by consequence, are driven into that sad and dismal idolatry, as to worship God as an old man sitting in heaven, or as three old men sitting and consulting together, as their images represent the most holy and incomprehensible trinity: but if the people themselves, that do so, be inexcusable, as certainly they are, because they might know better if they would use the means, what then shall we think of those that impose these things upon them? what a dreadful account will they have to give another day? which that you and I may be sure to avoid, we must be so far from making any visible image or picture of God, that we must not so much as frame any similitude or resemblance of him, no, not in our brains or fancies; but whensoever we would think of God, we must abstract our thoughts from all things else, so as not to think him like to any thing in the world we know, for so really he is not.

Thirdly, HAVING thus refined your thoughts, and taken them off from all created beings, if you would think aright of God, you must still apprehend him as one infinite above all things else that you are able to apprehend: and the truest conceptions that you can have of him, are these and the like,

1. THINK of God not as any particular, but the universal being of the world; as one that gives not only life and motion, but being and existence unto all things else, whether in *heaven above* or in *earth beneath*. This is that notion and conception of God, which the apostle *St. Paul* would have instilled in the *Athenians*, telling them, *that it is in him we live, move, and have our being*, Acts xvii. 28. and that this is the most proper notion that we can have of God, is plain from those names whereby

God

God hath unveiled himself unto us in scripture: as in the *new testament* he is called *Kύριος* from the antient *Greek* word *Kύρω*, the same with *εἰμι* or *ὑπάρχω*, to be. And therefore *Kύριος* properly signifies the same with *τὸ ὄν* the being, as *Plato* rightly termed God, and *ὃν ἵπτον*, the being of beings, as *Aristotle* called him. In the *old testament* he is usually called *יהוה* and *יה* both which words signify being or essence in general. And when *Moses* asked God his name, that he might know how to conceive of him, God did not say I am this, or that, or the other thing, but *אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה* I am that I am, and simply, *אֶהְיֶה* I am, *Exod. iii. 14*. Whereby he plainly signifies to us what thoughts and conceptions he would have us to entertain of him; that we should think of him as of one that is in and of himself the supreme and universal being of the world; that gives essence and existence unto all things else; that he depends upon nothing, but all things else depend upon him; and that he is a most pure, simple, and uncompounded being, having all things in himself, and nothing in himself but what is himself; not only a wise, a good, a just, a powerful, a great and glorious God, but wisdom, goodness, justice, power, greatness, and glory itself, the infinite and indivisible center of all perfections whatsoever; one that is all things that we can desire, yea, infinitely more than we can desire, imagine, or conceive; and therefore when he would declare what he is unto us, he only saith, *I am*, leaving us to make the application of him to ourselves, according to our several wants, capacities, or desires; he sets as it were his hand to a blank, that we may unite under whatsoever good thing we would have of him. And thus we are to think of God as one that is an universal being, and not only the chiefest, but the only universal good in the world, being in, and of himself, whatsoever is good or lovely, whatsoever is pure or desirable, whatsoever is pleasing, yea, whatsoever is convenient or needful to make men happy.

2. HENCE also you should apprehend and think of God, not only as one that is infinitely above all things, but as one likewise, who alone made, supports, preserves, possesseth, governs, and disposeth all things in the whole world; one, who though he was infinitely happy in the enjoyment of his own perfections, yet of his infinite goodness he was pleased to raise the stately fabrick of the world we live in, commanding it out of nothing by his own almighty word, only saying, *let it be so, and it was so*: thus he made the heavens, with all things that are in them; thus he made the earth, with all things that are upon it; and among the rest, thus he made you and me. And as he made, so he still preserves and governs the world by the word of his mouth, or according to his own will and pleasure; so that nothing doth or can happen in the world, but only just as he would have it: neither must we think that he takes cognizance only of the more noble and sublime parts of the creation, such as the cherubims and seraphims, in the immaterial; the sun, moon, and stars, in the material heavens; as if he only governed them, and left the government of the inferior creatures wholly to themselves, as some have fondly conceived of him: no, you must apprehend him as ordering and managing not only all things in general, but every thing in particular, that is in the world, as our saviour informs us, assuring us, that not so much as a sparrow can move, or fall to the ground without his order and concurrence, *Matth. x. 29*. And though there be innumerable creatures in the world, far exceeding the arithmetick both of men and angels, yet he takes special notice of every one of them, so that *the very hairs of our head are all numbered* by him, as our saviour tells us, *ver. 30*. for indeed every thing is his, *the heaven, the heaven of heavens is the Lords, the earth also, and all that is therein*, *Deut. x. 14*. Every thing that you can fancy yourselves to have, it is all his; your houses, your lands, your goods, your money, your meat, your drink, your souls, your bodies, every thing, is his, infinitely more his, than it is, or can be yours; and therefore you cannot but think that he numbers, and weighs, and measures, and observes, and takes particular notice of every individual thing in the world, as well as of all things in general; as also that he is the first, the supreme, the universal governour, disposer, director, and orderer of all, and every the actions, motions, and occurrences in the world.

3. HENCE also you cannot but think of God as one that is continually looking upon you, being of that infinite and boundless majesty, greatness, and immensity, that he contains all things, but is contained of nothing; not included in heaven, or excluded out of earth, but filling all places in heaven and earth, at all times, wholly with his essential, glorious, incomprehensible, and divine presence,

sence, *in omnibus, extra omnia, ubique totus*, as St. *Augustine* words it; in all things, beyond all things, every where wholly the same infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God. Thus *David* thought of God, *Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8.* Thus *Job* too thought of him, saying, *lo he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, and I perceive him not,* *Job ix. 11.* as if he should have said, I cannot shine, but still God is with me; he always sees me, though I cannot see him.

THUS are you and I to be always thinking upon God, as one that is always thinking upon us, and knows what we think better than ourselves do; as one whose presence is always with us, and his eye continually upon us, so that we can never be out of his sight. Thus we are to think of him at this moment, as one whose glory shines round about us, and who hath heard all along, and still hears what I say of him, and observeth likewise what your thoughts have been and still are employed about, whether you have been thinking of him or no, or hark'ning and observing how you ought to think of him; and thus wheresoever you are, whatsoever you do, your thoughts are still to be upon God, apprehending the all-glorious and supreme being, the basis and foundation of all things, the maker and governour of the world, to be always looking about you, upon you, into you, through you, weighing and considering every act you do, every word you speak, every thought you think, every passion or affection that moves or stirs within you, intending to judge you accordingly another day, when he *shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil,* *Eccles. xii. 14.* Thus it is, that you are always to be thinking of God, your hearts being continually possessed with a due sense of his greatness and glory, and your minds with awful and reverential apprehensions of his almighty power, and supreme authority, in and over the whole world; so as to have your whole soul employed and taken up, either with set and solemn contemplations of him, or at least with inward and private ejaculations to him; always looking upon him as looking upon you, and admiring, extolling, and adoring that infinite confluence of all perfections that are concentrated in him. And verily would you be persuaded to have God thus always in your minds and thoughts, what holy and what happy creatures would you soon be?

First, WHAT holy creatures would you be, if your thoughts were always thus running upon God? how fearful would you be of offending him? how careful to please him? how devout would you then be in praying to him? how attentive in hearing from him? how serious would you then be in all religious services? how just, how charitable, how circumspect in all your actions? religion would then seem another thing to you, than what heretofore you have fancied; you would then be so far from putting God off with a few external performances, that you would think your whole souls too little, your whole lives too short, to worship so great, so glorious, so transcendent a being as he is; you would not then need any arguments to persuade you to honour and obey, to love and fear him: for such thoughts of God as these are would make such vehement impressions upon you, and have that force and power over you, that you would be always restless and unquiet, never thinking yourselves well, but when you are doing something wherein ye may serve him, and manifest your love, obedience, and thankfulness unto him.

2. AND what happy, as well as holy creatures would you then be? for so far as you think and contemplate aright upon God, you do indeed partake of that happiness for which alone your persons were at first designed, and your natures fitted. You would in a manner live in heaven, whilst you are upon earth; your souls would be above, although your bodies be below; and, by consequence, nothing upon earth would disturb your happiness, or make you miserable: for whatsoever happens here below, is still below you, whose thoughts are soaring aloft as high as heaven, there contemplating of, and enjoying him that governs the world, and orders all things in it; by which means, in the midst of all the storms and tempests which may be raised without, you still have calmness and tranquility, peace and happiness within; because by your continually thinking upon God, as managing and disposing of all things in the world by his almighty power, and infinite wisdom, and especially if you think upon him as your redeemer too, as well as maker, and as one reconciled unto you by the death of Christ, then I say you cannot but repose that trust and confidence in him, which will enable you cry out with *David* in the midst of all outward calamities which you either feel or hear, *my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise,* *Psal. lvii. 7.*

THUS now you have seen how God ought to be in all your thoughts, and what extraordinary advantages will accrue to you by it. I hope I need not use any more arguments to persuade you to call in your thoughts from other things, and to fix them upon him that made them, and so bring them thither where they were at first designed to dwell. And if there be any here present, who shall still suffer their thoughts to spend themselves upon the impertinent toys and trifles of this lower world, and not raise them up to God, I shall take the boldness to tell such amongst you, that you are wicked men; this being the great character and mark which the Holy Ghost here gives of a wicked man. And therefore, whatsoever outward profession you make of religion, you have nothing of pure and true religion within you; for as God is the only object of all religion, so is serious thinking of him the very first act of religion which we can perform unto him, and without which all religious services whatsoever have nothing of true piety and devotion in them. And therefore, being desirous to be instrumental in directing you all how to become real saints, truly pious, and heirs of salvation, I have endeavoured to explain this great duty unto you, which is indeed the ground and foundation of all other duties whatsoever, which you can or ought to perform to almighty God. Let me therefore beseech you once again to be serious in labouring after it, and to take pains with your backward hearts to bring them to it; have God always before your eyes; let him remain continually in your thoughts, and oft-times retiring yourselves quite from the world, raise up your thoughts higher and higher; and when you have got them as high as possibly you can, then conceive of God, as one that is infinitely higher than them all; and never give over 'till you find yourselves at a loss, amazed at the infinite perfections of so great, so glorious, so immutable, so super-eminent, so incomprehensible a being, and so melt away into an holy longing and desiring to come to that blessed place, where in and thro' Christ you shall do nothing else but behold that all-glorious being *face to face*, and without any disturbance or interruption from the creatures enjoy his presence, partake of his favour, adore his perfections, sing forth his praises, extol his mercy, his wisdom, power, and glory, and have him continually and perfectly in your thoughts and affections unto all eternity.

S E R M O N CXLIII.

The Happiness of having our Sins forgiven.

PSAL. xxxii. I.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

WE, who are here assembled this morning to perform our worship and homage to him that made us, altho' we were all made of the same mold, and had the image of God enstamped upon us all alike; yet it is strange to observe how much difference there is amongst us. Difference in our callings, and difference in our conditions in the world; difference in the temperature of our bodies, and difference in the dispositions of our minds; difference in our judgments and opinions, and difference in our passions and affections; some loving what others hate, others hating what some love; some fearing what others hope for, and some hoping for what others fear; some desiring others detestations, others detesting their desires: but, notwithstanding, there is one thing that we all agree in; that is, we all desire to be happy: yet even in this too we do not so much agree in the desire of happiness, but we differ as much in the prosecution of it. To be happy in general we all desire; but, according to the diversity of our tempers and dispositions, we have divers notions and conceptions of happiness itself, and also of the object of it; and it is a rare thing to find one that hits upon the right: for we living only by sense, and conversing ordinarily with nothing but dirt and clay, we are generally grown so low-spirited and earthly-minded, as not to fancy or aim at any higher happiness, than what we can pick out of our fellow creatures upon earth, contenting ourselves with the lowest and meanest things imaginable, for the object of that which we account our happiness. Thus we may observe some so brutish, as to place the happiness of their souls only in pleasing and gratifying of their senses, and so, though capable of the joys of angels, look no higher than to be fellow-commoners with the brutes that perish. Others please themselves with pleasing others, and fancy themselves no farther happy, than they think that others fancy them to be so, and so place their own happiness in other mens fickle fancies, and variable opinions of them. Another sort of men there is amongst us, that may rather be termed worms than men, in that they feed upon nothing but dust and clay, even disdaining not to stoop so low as to lick up the serpents food, making the fancied riches of this transient world the only object of their souls desires, and so compute their happiness from the greatness of their crop, or fulness of their trade; from the largeness of their estates, or success of their adventures: but we cannot but all know how frequently we are mistaken in our opinions of things; and none of us but must needs have found by experience before now, that there is no real happiness to be enjoyed in any of these things; all things here below being so far from satisfying our immortal souls, and by consequence from making of us truly happy, that we are ordinarily miserable in the enjoyment of them, and always capable of enjoying more than they are able to afford us.

Now

THUS now you have seen how God ought to be in all your thoughts, and what extraordinary advantages will accrue to you by it. I hope I need not use any more arguments to persuade you to call in your thoughts from other things, and to fix them upon him that made them, and so bring them thither where they were at first designed to dwell. And if there be any here present, who shall still suffer their thoughts to spend themselves upon the impertinent toys and trifles of this lower world, and not raise them up to God, I shall take the boldness to tell such amongst you, that you are wicked men; this being the great character and mark which the Holy Ghost here gives of a wicked man. And therefore, whatsoever outward profession you make of religion, you have nothing of pure and true religion within you; for as God is the only object of all religion, so is serious thinking of him the very first act of religion which we can perform unto him, and without which all religious services whatsoever have nothing of true piety and devotion in them. And therefore, being desirous to be instrumental in directing you all how to become real saints, truly pious, and heirs of salvation, I have endeavoured to explain this great duty unto you, which is indeed the ground and foundation of all other duties whatsoever, which you can or ought to perform to almighty God. Let me therefore beseech you once again to be serious in labouring after it, and to take pains with your backward hearts to bring them to it; have God always before your eyes; let him remain continually in your thoughts, and oft-times retiring yourselves quite from the world, raise up your thoughts higher and higher; and when you have got them as high as possibly you can, then conceive of God, as one that is infinitely higher than them all; and never give over 'till you find yourselves at a loss, amazed at the infinite perfections of so great, so glorious, so immutable, so super-eminent, so incomprehensible a being, and so melt away into an holy longing and desiring to come to that blessed place, where in and thro' Christ you shall do nothing else but behold that all-glorious being *face to face*, and without any disturbance or interruption from the creatures enjoy his presence, partake of his favour, adore his perfections, sing forth his praises, extol his mercy, his wisdom, power, and glory, and have him continually and perfectly in your thoughts and affections unto all eternity.

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Now

Now seeing that we all desire to be happy, and yet often find ourselves so fearfully mistaken about that happiness which we do desire, it must needs behove us all to consult some other person besides ourselves about it, that we may rightly understand what true happiness is, and which is the ready way that leads unto it; otherwise we may trudge about the world all our lives long, and encompass both sea and land to search for happiness, and shall never find it: but questionless there is none can better certify us what our happiness is, than he who first made us capable of being happy; and in the enjoyment of whom alone we can be so. I suppose there is none here present, but understand whom I mean, even the all-wise and eternal God, whom I hope you all believe to be a competent judge in this case, and are willing to submit your judgments unto his; but, if you consult him in this business, he'll tell you quite another story than you ever heard, or perhaps so much as thought of; for he hath given you his opinion under his hand concerning your happiness, in the holy scriptures left upon record, on purpose to shew wherein our happiness doth consist, and which is the way that leads unto it. But in all the scriptures you never find him calling them happy which you fancy or esteem to be so; for where doth he ever say, blessed are the rich, for they have great estates; blessed are the honourable that have much applause; or, blessed are the voluptuous, for they enjoy the pleasures of this world? no, no, when he speaks of happiness, he speaks after another rate: *blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the law of the Lord; and blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.* And indeed this is that blessedness which makes way for all the other, and without which we shall never know what it is to be blessed or happy; so that if you will take the word of almighty God himself, and trust his judgment concerning your happiness, here you have it in as plain terms as you could desire, or as himself could have delivered his opinion in; for though *David* was the person that spake these words, it was from the spirit of God that he spake them, by whose order also and command he spake so emphatically, and with admiration, *אַשְׁדֵּי נֶשְׁוִי פֶשַׁע*, *oh the happiness! oh the blessedness of such a man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* The very meaning of which words methinks should make us impatient and restless, 'till we understand the true meaning of them, and know who it is whom God himself esteems an happy and blessed man, even he *whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.*

FROM whence we may observe in general, that all men naturally are sinful and miserable; yea, therefore miserable, because sinful, and that our misery cannot be removed 'till our sins are covered; nor our persons blessed, until our transgressions are forgiven. But all such persons as have their transgressions forgiven, and their sins covered, are blessed; yea, therefore blessed, because their transgressions are forgiven, and their sins are covered; *blessed is he, &c.*

Now for the opening of the full meaning and purport of these words, that so I may give you some light into the nature of true felicity, and the way that leads unto it, we will consider,

1st, WHAT is transgression or sin.

2dly, WHAT it is to have transgressions forgiven, and sin covered.

3dly, How are they blessed, whose transgression is thus forgiven, and their sin covered.

4thly, How may we attain to this blessing.

As for the first, what transgression or sin is, there are three words here, which the Holy Ghost makes use of to express it by, *פֶשַׁע*, *חַטָּאָה*, and *עֲוֹן* which words are all used together. Also *Exodus xxxiv. 7.* the first word *פֶשַׁע* signifies properly a falling from, and rebelling against God. So the root is used, *וַהֲבִינֵנוּ נִפְשָׁנוּ בְּיָדָיו* *and they have rebelled against me.* So that every sin is an act of treason and rebellion against the crown of glory, the king of kings, who therefore looks upon every sinner as a rebel, as one that sides with Satan against God. The next word *חַטָּאָה* properly denotes missing the scope or mark we aim at, as the word is used, *וַאֲנִי חָטֵאתִי* *xx. 16.* For all our actions should be directed to the law of God, which when we miss, either by going beyond it, or falling short of it, then we are said to sin, as the Greek word *ἀμαρτία* also signifies. The last word here used is *עֲוֹן* which denotes properly perverseness or crookedness, and so metaphorically the obliquity of any

any action whereby it doth not agree with that streight rule of God's word, which it should be directed, and will be examined by. According to these several expressions, whereby the Holy Ghost sets forth the nature of sin, St. John rightly defines sin to be a transgression of the law. The ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐστίν, ἡ ἀνομία, 1 John iii. 4. that is, sin in its general nature is illegality, or the contrariety of any act or habit to the law of God. Thus Saul saith, *I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord*, 1 Sam. xv. 24. Now from this definition of sin, laid down by the apostle, we may observe four things especially to be considered in every sin.

First, THE command of God being pure and holy, sin, by reason of its contrariety to that command, cannot but leave a *macula*, a spot or blot upon the soul that doth commit it, making it so far impure or different from the law of God. Hence our saviour saith, *that those things which come from the heart defile a man*, Matt. xv. 18. And the Psalmist, speaking of all mankind as being sinners, saith, *they are altogether become filthy*, Psal. xiv. 3. *for their mind and conscience is defiled*, Tit. i. 15. Thus also sin itself is called a *spot or wrinkle*, Eph. v. 27. because as spots and wrinkles deface the body, so doth sin the soul. And this is that which makes both sin and sinners odious and abominable unto God, *he being of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, which is nothing else but impurity itself: by reason whereof the soul, that was made most absolutely pure and perfect, is morally corrupted and depraved in its faculties; its beauty is defaced, its lustre clouded, and its strength abated; so that it may justly be pronounced filthy and deformed, both by God and men. But this effect of sin upon the soul is not properly taken away by remission, but by sanctification, whereby the blood of Christ *cleanseth us from all sin*, 1 John i. 7. and we are *washed from our sins in his blood*, Rev. i. 5. both which expressions suppose something of impurity or filth.

Secondly, EVERY sin hath its offensiveness unto God, whereby he is provoked, angry, and displeased at it; for the law of God is, according to his nature, holy; and therefore sin, being contrary to his law, must needs be contrary to his nature too. And we know by ourselves, that what is contrary to our natures is offensive and displeasing to us; and therefore no wonder that sin is so to God, he being the best of all goods, and sin the worst of all evils; for so there is a direct contrariety, a diametrical opposition betwixt his holiness and sin's impurity. Hence his people in the wilderness are said to have *provoked him to anger with their inventions*, Psal. cvi. 29. *and to have angered him at the waters of strife*, ver. 32. *yea, forty years long*, saith he, *was I grieved with this generation*, Psal. xcv. 10. and so David's sins of murder and adultery are said to have *displeased the Lord*, 2 Sam. xi. 27. or, as the original imports, they were evil in his eyes; that is, he could not look upon them without loathing and abhorrence. Which consideration should make us dread the very thoughts of sin, whereby we increase the wrath, and incur the displeasure of almighty God himself against us.

Thirdly, HENCE every sin, by reason of its contrariety to God's law and offensiveness to his majesty, really, and by the strictest rules of justice, deserveth death, which the apostle expresses, saying, *the wages of sin is death*, Rom. vi. 23. where by death we are to understand the separation of the soul, not only from the body, but from God too, which is indeed the proper death of the soul; forasmuch as the life and happiness of the soul consists in its union unto God, and communion with him. But sin, by reason of its contrariety to God's nature, and loathsomeness in his sight, makes a separation betwixt God and the soul, Isa. lix. 2. from which flows all manner of misery, which it is impossible for a creature to undergo. All which was threaten'd also under the name of death, to keep man from sin: *in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die the death*, Gen. ii. 17. Which death or misery, as it is the wages and desert of sin, must needs be greater than a creature of itself can ever suffer: for sin hath an infinite evil pravity or deformity in it, in that it is directly contrary and offensive to the infinite goodness, purity, and glory of God; for all acknowledge that the greatness of the offence is to be computed from the dignity of the person against whom it is committed, so that by how much greater the person is that receives the injury, by so much greater is the injury that he doth receive. As Shimei's cursing of David was a much greater offence than if he had said the same words against his equal. But then what shall we think of the offences committed against the supreme being of the world, the infinite and eternal God? certainly they must needs deserve infinite and eternal

nishment, so that no creature can ever be able to undergo as much as his sins deserve, and therefore every impenitent sinner must ever undergo as much as he is able; and this is the reason that hell-torments are eternal.

Fourthly, HENCE in the last place, so soon as ever any person hath committed any sin, he is immediately obliged to suffer eternal death, as the desert and wages of his sin; and although God at present doth not inflict it upon him, as in justice he may, yet the man is every moment obnoxious to it, and is still bound over to answer for his sin before the tribunal of God, and this is that which we call the guilt of sin. Thus all the world is said to be guilty before God, *Rom. iii. 19.* ὑπόδικος τῷ Θεῷ, subject to the judgment of God, as the expression properly implies. Now this guilt of sin, or obligation to punishment, remains after the act itself is passed, and perhaps forgotten too; for the act itself may be but transient, and so as soon forgotten as committed: but though thou forgettest thy sins, thou must not think that God does so; or that because the act is passed, therefore thy guilt is past to: though thy sins were committed many years ago, yet they may still lie at thy door, crying for vengeance as much as in thy very commission of them: thou art still obliged to bear the punishment of them, as well as when they were but newly committed; for though the act of sin be transient and soon passeth away, yet the guilt still continues; thou art still obnoxious to the wrath of God, and ever wilt be so, until thy sin be pardoned. Which brings me to the second thing I promised, to shew, even what it is to *have our transgressions forgiven, and our sin covered.*

BUT if you have but rightly weighed and considered what hath been already delivered concerning the nature and effects of sin, you will easily apprehend the true notion of pardon, or what it is to *have our transgressions forgiven*; for every sin as you have heard, being a transgression of God's law, and an offence to his majesty, therefore doth it oblige him that commits it to undergo the consequences of God's wrath, even eternal death, which God in his law hath threatned against sin. So that every man by reason of his sins is obnoxious to death, and in continual danger of hell-torments; and therefore so long as he continues so, he is upon that account reputed or esteemed by God as a sinner, as one who is worthy of, and obliged to suffer death. Now remission or forgiveness of sin, is nothing else but the cancelling this our obligation to death or eternal punishments, or dissolving those bonds, whereby we were before bound to receive *the wages of sin*, by which means we are so freed from our sins, as if we had never been guilty of them; neither doth God look upon us any longer as sinners, nor deals with us according to our former demerits, but reckons us amongst just and righteous persons, no ways obliged now to suffer those penalties which himself hath denounced against sinners.

BUT this being a matter of so great importance and unspeakable comfort to us all, because we have all sinned, I shall endeavour more particularly to prove and explain it to you. When *David* had committed those two great sins of murder and adultery, God, by his prophet *Nathan*, reproves him for them; upon which *David* cries out, *I have sinned against the Lord*, and *Nathan* said, *the Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die*, 2 *Sam. xii. 13.* Where we may see that God's forgiving or putting away our sins, is only his freeing us from death which we have deserved by them; as it is plain also from our saviour's saying of him that blasphemes against the Holy Ghost, *that he never hath forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation*, *Mark iii. 28.* where we may observe how forgiveness is opposed to our being in danger of eternal damnation, so that he that is forgiven is not in danger of eternal damnation, and he that is in danger of eternal damnation is not forgiven; and therefore forgiveness is the putting of us out of the danger of hell, and all our deserved torments, which also is imported in the several words and phrases, whereby the Holy Ghost expresses this blessing to us; as in my text it is expressed by taking away our sins, *וְשָׁחַתְנוּ* whose sin is taken away, implying, that there is nothing remaining of it, it is all gone, or at least it is covered, so as God takes no notice of it, minds it no more than if he had never seen it: thus in the next verse, forgiveness is expressed by not having sin imputed to us; that is, God doth not lay it to our charge, nor reckon it to us, or put it upon our score. Thus sometimes it is called *blotting out our sins*, *Isa. xliii. 25.* our sins are frequently called *ὀφειλήματα* debts, because by our sins we are debtors unto God's justice, owing nothing less than eternal punishments for them, which our blessed Lord hath taught us each day to pray that they might be remitted. When therefore God
blots

blots these debts out of his book, and doth not require them of us, nor charge them upon us, but takes off all the obligations whereby we were bound to pay them, and makes them void and of none effect, then he is said to forgive us our sins. Many expressions we have to the same purpose, as *Psal.* ciii. 10, 11, 12. *Mic.* vii. 18, 19. *Hos.* xiv. 2. Thus therefore, when God pardons our sins, he acquits us from all our obligations to punishment, looks upon us as if we had not sinned, and therefore is no longer offended at us for them; so that he remits both the punishment and offence, willing neither to condemn nor be displeased with us for the many more. It is true, he may afflict us in mercy but not in judgment; he may deal with us as a father to chastise us, not as a judge to condemn us according to our desert. For the farther explication of this pardon, consider,

First, It is God alone can pardon sins, for it is against him only that they are committed, and therefore it must be by him only that they can be pardoned, *Psal.* li. 4. And seeing our debts are owing only to him, who but he can be able to remit them? I suppose there is none here present but know better things concerning the debts which are owing to themselves, than to think that any but themselves can pardon them. But what shall we think then of those that go to *Rome* for the cancelling their obligations unto heaven? or sollicite the pope or any of his creatures to absolve them for those offences which they have committed against their great creator? All that we can say is this, that it is certainly the most absurd as well as impious practice that was ever introduced amongst the sons of men; and that whosoever takes this course to be acquitted from their debts, they do but incur more, and that they do not only pay for such kinds of pardons in this, but they must do it again in another world.

Secondly, We can never expect that God should deny himself to pardon us, or that it can stand with the glory of his power and justice, to put up the affronts and injuries which his own creatures have committed against him, without having satisfaction made unto him for them; especially considering that his word is passed; he hath said it, *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*; that is, that every sin shall be punished with death: and seeing he hath said it, he cannot but perform it; neither must we think that he will be unfaithful to his word, that so he may be favourable unto us; or violate his justice to exalt his mercy.

Thirdly, NOTHING that we can do can ever recompense God for the least offence that we commit against him, nor satisfy his justice either in whole or in part for our own or others sins. For there is nothing less than eternal death due to every sin, and, by consequence, how many thousand eternal deaths have we deserved for those thousands of sins we have committed? and when any man hath done as much as is required of him, or hath suffered as much as he hath deserved, then let him begin to boast his works of supererogation, and plead for the distributions of pardons and indulgences out of the treasures of the church, collected from the merits of the saints. In the mean while let us all look upon ourselves as unprofitable servants, wretched and undone caitiffs, who have offended the Lord of hosts and incurred his displeasure, and altogether unable to satisfy him or help ourselves.

Fourthly, It is only upon the account of Christ, that God is pleased to dispense his pardons; for it is he alone that as man suffered, and as God satisfied for our sins, *Isa.* liii. 5, 6, 7. *Rom.* v. 8, 9. And therefore our forgiveness is attributed only to his death, *Eph.* i. 7. *Col.* i. 14. and the reason is, because he dying in our steads, gave himself a ransom for us all, *1 Tim.* ii. 6. By which means he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being himself made a curse for us, and taken off our obligations unto death, by undergoing it in our rooms. In short, take it thus: we by our sins are indebted unto God, and owe him nothing less than eternal death; which we being unable to pay without being undone for ever, the son of God himself was pleased to become our surety, not only to be bound for us, but to pay our debt; which he did, by suffering that death for us in our natures, which we were designed to suffer in our own persons; upon whose account therefore we are all brought into a capacity of the blessed here spoken off, *blessed is, &c.*

HAVING thus considered what it is to have our transgressions forgiven, and our sins covered, I need not surely spend much time in shewing, that that man is blessed whose sins are thus remitted; for I hope there is none here present, but know themselves to be sinners, even that you have broken those just and righteous laws which the eternal God hath commanded you to observe and keep; and I suppose also, that

that you cannot be ignorant of the sad and dismal consequents of your sins, and what dreadful judgments you are obnoxious to by reason of them; and therefore cannot but be sensible of their happiness, *whose sins are pardoned, and their transgressions covered.*

HOWSOEVER, to prepare you the better for the clear understanding of this transcendent happiness, give me leave to mind you a little both of your sins and dangers. *First*, as for your sins, I hope you need not be much minded of them; for I cannot but wonder, methinks, how you are able to keep them out of your minds, or to think of any thing else, considering that every thing you do is some way or other sinful; yea, not only your actions, but your very words and thoughts, are defiled with sin: for certainly mankind is as bad now, as it was before the flood, when *God saw the wickedness of man, that it was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*, Gen. vi. 5. But besides the general corruption of your natures, and the continual pravity of your lives, I dare say, there is none here present but is conscious to himself of many particular and remarkable sins that he hath been guilty of, and defiled with; I do not say, that you have all indulged yourselves in the more atrocious sins and scandalous enormities; but do you not remember the time when you spake unadvisedly with your lips, or thought maliciously against your neighbour? do not you remember the time when your tongues have uttered falsehood, and your hearts have meditated deceit and fraud? when you studied to over-reach your brother, and endeavoured to go beyond and cheat him in such or such a matter? do not you remember the times that you have spent in your pride or revellings, in admiring yourselves, and censuring others? do not you remember the time when you blasphemed God's name, or abused his mercies, profaned his sabbaths and despised his service, slighted his favour and neglected your devotions to him for a whole day together? or can you possibly forget how your hearts have burned with lust and passion, and your souls have been enflamed with malice and revenge? how jolly and merry you have been amongst men, how dull and heavy when you appear before God? how eager and earnest you have been in the pursuit of earth, how cold and indifferent in your looking after heaven? or have you forgotten since the last time ye were overtaken with surfeiting or drunkenness, and the cares of this life, preferring the creature before the great creator, who is God blessed for evermore? I dare say there is none of you but know yourselves to have been guilty of some, if not many of these sins which I have now recited, and of others like unto them, and that, to the original corruption which you brought into the world, you have added thousands of actual transgressions since you have been here.

Now let me desire you to bethink yourselves a little, what a sad condition these your sins have brought you into; for let me tell you, how slight soever you make of them, because at present you may live in ease and plenty, all your sins are committed, not against men but God, and therefore whether you see it, or believe it or no, he that made you is really angry with you; for *God is angry with the wicked every day*, Psal. vii. 11. And therefore be it known unto thee, whosoever thou art, that art still in thy sins, he that governs the world, the eternal God, at this very moment frowns upon thee, insomuch that if thou couldst but see how angry and displeased he is with thee, thou wouldst not be able to endure thyself, but wouldst immediately sink down into nothing, or rather into the very torments of hell. And although God doth not as yet discover this the fierceness of his wrath against thee, because thou couldst not live, yet be sure all the curses written in the law of God against sin, are ready at God's command to fall upon thee: nay, they are upon thee already, God himself hath pronounced thee cursed, saying, *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. And if God hath cursed thee, who can bless thee? especially seeing he hath cursed thy very blessings, as he himself saith, *Mal. ii. 2*. So long as thou continnest in this condition, thou hast no such thing as a blessing in all thy house; for thy very house, and all that is in it, is cursed to thee; yea, be where thou wilt, do what thou canst, thou art still accursed, and in continual danger of hell itself; for thou standest continually upon the very brink of the bottomless pit, and mayst justly expect each moment to be tumbled in; for thy sins have offended God, and therefore his justice hath bound thee over to answer it before his tribunal, where there are many at this moment trembling before him, expecting their last and dreadful doom, and thou knowest

knowest not but *this night thy soul may be required of thee*, and summoned to appear, and answer for thy faults at the same place. Howsoever thou canst never promise thyself one moment respite out of hell, being continually obnoxious to the stroke of divine justice, for those very sins which thou hast hitherto made thy pleasure and delight.

THIS, this therefore is the sad and wretched condition of all sinners, and that which sin brings every soul into that is guilty of it: but tell me then, what do ye now think of those persons whose sins are pardoned? do not ye think them the happiest persons in the world? surely you cannot chuse: but whether you think them to be so, or no, I am sure they are, and you will think so too, if you do but consider,

First, THAT all those whose sins are pardoned are out of all danger, and perfectly secure from evil; for in that their sins which brought them into all this danger and mischief are taken away, there danger must needs cease, and all mischief be removed from them; for they can be no longer obliged to pay the debt when the bond is cancelled, nor to bear the punishment when they are acquitted from it; so that they may walk securely and fear no ill; for God's anger is appeased towards them, and the curses of the law are taken off from them; for they are no longer guilty, and therefore cannot in justice be condemned, *though their sins were as scarlet they are now as white as snow, though they were like crimson they are now as wool*, Isa. i. 18. that is, though they were sinners they are now no longer so; their sins are now forgotten, as if they had never been committed, and their souls are now as safe, as if they had never been in danger; and therefore lift up your heads for joy, all ye whose sins are pardoned: God was angry at you, but now he is well pleased with you; you were once in danger both of temporal and eternal punishments, but now you are secured from both. All the curses of the law did once belong unto you, but now the blessings of the gospel do all attend you.

CONSIDER this, all ye that dream of happiness in this world, and then tell me whether any happiness can be compared to his *whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered?*

ESPECIALLY considering, in the next place, that when God pardons any man's sins, he pardons all his sins; all his acts of grace and pardon are without exceptions, so that all our former sins shall be as if they never had been, *Jer. l. 20.* nay, more than that too, whensoever God pardons our sins, he likewise accepts our persons, so far from looking upon us as sinners, that he accounts us righteous. For though these two, remission of sins and acceptation of our persons be distinct branches of our justification before God, yet they are never separated, for God never remits any man's sins without accepting his person, nor accepts his person without remitting his sins too; for these always go together, and though not in the notion, yet in the application of them, they are inseparable; so that whensoever God imputeth righteousness, be sure he imputes no sin; and where he imputes no sin, he always imputeth righteousness. This notion I ground upon that passage of *St. Paul, Rom. iv.* where he quotes these very words of the psalmist, to prove that God imputeth righteousness without works, *even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*, ver. 6, 7, 8. But the psalmist doth not speak one word of imputed righteousness, but only of not imputing sin; yet from the non-imputation of sin, *St. Paul* proves the imputation of righteousness without works, which argument would be senseless and not conclusive at all, unless the not imputing of sin did necessarily suppose and imply the imputation of righteousness, as most certainly it doth; all remission of sin, necessarily depending upon the sufferings and righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and therefore the apostles argument is both right and forcible; for seeing the psalmist here saith, *that man is blessed to whom the Lord imputes no sin*, it necessarily follows, that our blessedness depends upon the imputation of righteousness to us, without which God could not but impute sin. And seeing *David* saith, *that God imputes no sin*, *St. Paul* rightly concludes that he imputes righteousness, because that the connexion betwixt these two is so inseparable, that one cannot possibly be without the other; and therefore it is that they are often put for one another, especially remission in scripture is often put for our whole justification, because

whosoever is pardoned is also justified before God: if our names be blotted out of the roll of sinners, be sure they are put into the catalogue of saints; if our sins be pardoned, God's wrath is appeased, and if his wrath be appeased towards us, he cannot but be well pleased with us, and smile upon us.

AND if so, how blessed, how happy must that man needs be, *whose transgression is forgiven, and his sin covered*? Certainly you do not know what the word happiness means, if you think not this the highest happiness that a creature is capable of; for when thy sins are pardoned, is the eternal God himself reconciled unto thee? is he become thy friend and thy God? doth he rejoice over thee, and rest in his love towards thee? doth he smile upon thee, and so manifest his respect and favour to thee? Oh happy, thrice happy soul, infinitely more happy than I am able to express, or thyself, as yet, art able to conceive; yea, and it is the only happiness too, that he that made us, hath appointed for us! For he hath made nothing to make men happy, intending himself alone, and his love and favour, should be the only object of their felicity; and yet this great, this exceeding great and only happiness, all they have both a right to, and possession of, whose sins are pardoned; which if you do but seriously consider, none of you but must needs cry out with the psalmist in my text, *blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and his sin covered*.

Thirdly and lastly, THAT nothing may be wanting to make them compleatly happy, consider, that whose sins soever are remitted, their lusts are subdued too, and all that are accounted righteous are made to be so; for the son and spirit always go together, the one to justify our persons, and the other to sanctify our natures; so that the merit of Christ is never imputed to us, but the graces of the spirit are likewise implanted in us; and therefore every one *whose transgression is forgiven, and his sin covered*, his heart is also purified, and his soul made holy. Hence it is that it is here said, *blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile*; implying, that all such persons that have their sins pardoned, have no guile, no deceit, no hypocrisy in their hearts, but are really and truly holy. As God is reconciled to them, so are they reconciled to him; as the son hath vouchsafed his pardons to them, the spirit distributes his graces amongst them, whereby their minds are enlightened, their judgments informed, their wills rectified, and all their affections so turned into their proper chanel, that they are enabled to serve God faithfully in this, and, by consequence, to enjoy him eternally in the world to come; and all they whose sins are pardoned, and their persons justified, their souls shall be most certainly saved, God himself having told us expressly, *that whom he justifieth, them he also glorifieth*, Rom. viii. 30.

CONSIDER this, and then tell me, who is, or can be, if that man be not happy *whose sins are pardoned*. Must not that man needs be happy who hath the image of God re-instamped upon him, and is made holy as God is holy? must not that man needs be happy, who is in favour with the Lord of hosts, and hath his soul adorned with all true grace and virtue? must not that man needs be happy who walks in the ready way that leads to heaven, and shall e'er long be crowned with eternal glory? Thus happy, thus blessed, is every one amongst you *whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile*. And therefore if there be any amongst you, as I hope there are, whose sins are pardoned, give me leave in few terms to congratulate the happiness that is conferred upon you, not such happiness as deluded mortals upon earth do so much covet and admire, which hath no other existence but only in disturbed fancies; but that real, that true, that eternal happiness which God himself accounts to be so, and therefore hath proclaimed you to be happy. And therefore, whatsoever your condition be in this world, you are blessed in it, and it is blessed to you; for that man surely cannot but be blessed, whom truth itself hath pronounced to be so; and therefore trouble not your heads, nor concern yourselves about the occurrences of this transient life, whatsoever happens you cannot but be blessed, in that your sins are pardoned, and so your souls are out of the reach of danger; he that governs the world is become your friend, your fortress, and your exceeding great reward, and therefore envy not the prosperity of the foolish, nor fret at their pomp and grandeur; they may think themselves to be happy, but God himself hath said that you are so; and therefore suffer not yourselves to be overwhelmed with grief, or tormented with needless fears,

but

but still lift up your head for joy, as knowing that your redemption draweth nigh. And in the mean while do but you continue your fidelity and allegiance to the king of heaven, and be as dutiful unto him, as he is gracious unto you, and you'll all have cause to say from your own experience, that *blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, &c.*

BUT I fear that I have been injurious to your patience, in that I have treated so long of the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and have not as yet shewn how all that are here present may be partakers of this happiness, which methinks none of you but should be very impatient till you hear; for you are all as yet capable of it, and invited to it, and none of you can miss of it, that will but observe these infallible rules which God hath prescribed in order to it; which that you may rightly understand, I shall unfold them to you in as few and plain terms as possibly I can, and as a matter of such importance requires. But let me tell you before-hand, that my acquainting you with the way and method how you may have your sins pardoned, will signify nothing unless you resolve to practise what I tell you, and really do it too according to your resolution; for it is not your knowing, but walking in the way to happiness that will bring you to it.

ALL such amongst you therefore as do really desire to be so happy as to have your *transgressions forgiven and your sins covered*, follow but these few directions and your work is done.

First, ACKNOWLEDGE your sins to God, and bewail your misery before him; look upon yourselves as less than the least of all God's mercies, as greater than the greatest of all sinners; let the remembrance of your sins be always grievous to you, and the burden of them intolerable; and in an humble sense of your vileness and wretchedness both by nature and practice, upon the bended knees both of body and soul, address yourselves to God, abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes before him, implore his mercy, and acknowledge your own unworthiness of it. And if you thus sincerely confess your sins, he hath promised to pardon them; for he himself hath said, *that if we confess our sins he is just and faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, 1 John i. 9. but you must remember so to confess them with your mouth, as to forsake them too, otherwise your confession will be so far from obtaining a pardon for your other sins, that itself will need one; *but whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy*, Prov. xxviii, 13. Wherefore if you desire to be so happy as to have your sins pardoned, be so wise as to abhor and leave them. Do not you think that the king of heaven will forgive your treasons and rebellions against him, so long as you actually bear arms and fight against him; but if you throw down your weapons, and become his loyal subjects for the future, you need not fear, but upon your submission he'll receive you into grace and favour: so that whatsoever sins any of you have been guilty of heretofore, whether sins of omission, or sins of commission, whether sins of a lighter tincture, or sins of a deeper dye, howsoever great, howsoever many they have been, yet do but now forsake both them, and all known sins whatsoever, and walk for the future in all the laws and commandments of God unto the utmost of your power blameless, and then I dare assure you, that your former transgressions shall never be mentioned or remembred against you more; you shall be free from them as if you never had been guilty of them, and, by consequence, as secure from ruin as if you had been void of sin, and so never subject to it. I speak not this of myself, no, he who alone can pardon your sins, hath passed his word for it; for thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of heaven and earth, to all, and every one here present, *repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin*, Ezek. xviii. 30.

BUT lastly, although if you forsake your sins, God will be sure to pardon them, yet you must not think that he therefore pardons them because you forsake them, neither must you expect pardon upon any such account, but only upon the account of Christ, who came into the world on purpose to save sinners, and was therefore called *Jesus*, because he came *to save his people from their sins*, Matth. i. 21. and it is only in *his blood* that we have redemption, even *the forgiveness of sins*, Eph. i. 7. And therefore when you have so repented of your sins as to be turned from them, and have done all or all you can, that is required of you, you must still believe in Christ, and him alone, for pardon and acceptance; humbly
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confiding, that in, and through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, your former sins that you have now forsaken, shall be, or are forgiven, and both your persons and performances for the future shall be accepted before God. And whosoever of you shall thus repent and believe in Christ, I dare, and do in the name of Christ pronounce them absolved from their sins, and assert them to be in the number of those blessed souls *whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

Thus I have shewn how great an happiness it is to have our sins pardoned; and how every one here present may attain unto it: which I should now endeavour to persuade you to, but that it would be too great a disparagement to your wisdom and discretion; as supposing you either so distracted in your brains, or debauched in your principles, that you must needs be incited to happiness, and courted into the way that leads to it, or else you will never mind it; but I hope there are none here present, but understand their own interest better than so. I know that you all know yourselves to be sinners, and therefore subject to the wrath of God, and eternal misery. And I have done my duty in acquainting you how you may so escape this your deserved misery, as to be invested with real and eternal happiness, by being indemnified from sins, and received into the love and favour of almighty God: it is now your interest as well as duty, to use the means prescribed for the attainment of so glorious and great an end. Even repent and turn from all your sins, and believe in Christ for the pardon of them; which whosoever here present shall truly and sincerely do, I assure them in the presence of God, and in the name of Jesus Christ, *their transgressions shall be forgiven, and their sins covered,* their lusts subdued, and their natures cleansed, their persons accepted and their souls blessed both here and for ever.

SERMON CXLIV.

Of good Works in general.

PSAL. xxxvii. 27.

And do good.

WE being all conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, have ever since been doing nothing but conceiving mischief, and bringing forth vanity, our whole lives being nothing else, but as one continued sin against him in whom we live: neither is it possible it should be otherwise, so long as we continue such as we came into the world; for our natures being defiled with sin, all our actions cannot but be so too. Hence it is that we are so often commanded in holy scripture to depart from evil, and cease to do evil, because naturally evil is always present with us; and if at any time we be so assisted by the grace of God, as not to sin, we may justly be said to depart from evil, and cease to do that which was wont to be our continual employment.

BUT verily it is such an employment, that, all things considered, we have all the reason in the world to leave it off as soon as we can; for so long as we continue sinning, we are certainly the most miserable creatures upon earth: for whatsoever our outward enjoyments may seem to be, we are still in a poor and slavish con-

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condition, continually employed in the devil's drudgery. And howsoever comely the outward man may seem to others, our souls are not only ugly and deformed, but filthy also and loathsome in the eyes of God, who being a most pure and holy being, cannot look upon them without abhorrence and detestation. And whatsoever parts or gifts we may fancy ourselves to have, how cunning soever and subtle we may be as to things of this world, we are still but fools and madmen in God's account, as *drinking down iniquity like water*, though we know it to be poison, and preferring the toys and trifles of this deceitful and transient world before eternal happiness and the joys of heaven. Whatsoever conceits also we may fondly entertain of ourselves and actions, all the while that we continue in sin, we do but act the part of devils incarnate, even carry on the same designs, and follow the same employments as the fiends of hell would do, were they in our circumstances, and had flesh and bones like us. And, by consequence, unless we depart from evil, we can expect no other but to depart from God, and to have our part and portion in that everlasting fire *prepared for the devil and his angels*.

ALL which being duly considered, I hope there is none here present but look upon themselves as highly concerned to leave sinning as fast as they can, and are stedfastly resolved to use all means which may any ways conduce thereto, as remembering that they are christians, and the eye of God is always upon them, and that all their actions e'erlong will be reviewed, and judgment passed upon them accordingly. And therefore avoiding all occasions of temptations unto sin, sincerely doing as much as they can themselves, and humbly imploring God's aid and assistance to enable them to do more, firmly believing, and trusting on the promises which God to that purpose hath made unto us in Jesus Christ; which whosoever doth, cannot miss of such influences of grace as he stands in need of, whereby he may be enabled to mortify his lusts and depart from evil.

BUT now we must know, that it is not enough for us to *depart from evil*, but we must *do good* too; by the former we may escape hell, but without the latter we shall never get to heaven; neither indeed is it possible for us to do the one without the other, no man can *do good* that doth not first *depart from evil*, and no man can *depart from evil*, but he must of necessity *do good*: for we are commanded and obliged always to be doing good, and therefore all the while that we are not doing good, we are breaking the command of God, and, by consequence, are doing evil; so that these two are inseparable companions, and it is altogether impossible they should e'er be parted, seeing we cannot do good without departing from evil, nor depart from evil without doing good.

HOPING therefore, or at least supposing, that the promises being duly considered, you are all resolved already within yourselves, to do your best endeavour, by the assistance of God's grace and spirit, to leave off, or depart from the several sins which you know yourselves to be guilty of, I shall now endeavour to explain unto you the other part of your duty, even doing good; and the first thing to be known concerning it, is what it is to *do good*, or how we may so do every thing as to make it a good work; and then secondly, what necessity there is of our thus doing good, and what advantage we shall get by it.

THE first question is, what it is to *do good*?

A QUESTION, which I suppose there is none of you but look upon yourselves as infinitely concerned to understand, and be thoroughly resolved in it; and it is not so easy to understand it aright, as it is generally thought to be; for certainly there is a very great mystery in it which we can never be thoroughly instructed in, without a great deal of pains, study, and care. Hence as we are here commanded to *do good*, so elsewhere we are enjoined to learn how to do it, *cease to do evil*, saith the prophet, and *learn to do well*, Isa. i. 17. so that doing well or doing good, is an art it seems which we are all bound to learn, and doubtless it is the highest and most noble art that any mortal can ever attain to; and yet, I hope, by the blessing of God, to make it so plain unto you, that there is none of you but may understand it, as well as you do the particular arts and trades which you are of in the world, so as to know how to manage and carry on your general callings as christians, as well as the particular callings which you are of, as men or citizens, which being a matter of such great importance to you all, I will endeavour to express it in as plain and perspicuous terms as possibly I can, that the meanest capacity in the congregation may apprehend it. For all persons of whatsoever rank or condition they be in this world, are equally concerned and obliged to be always

doing good, and most people are very apt to be mistaken in it, conceiting they do good, when in truth they do it not, which is mostly to be ascribed to their ignorance of the true nature of good actions, or as we commonly call them good works; which that you may for the future be thoroughly acquainted with, I shall endeavour to explain it in these following particulars.

First therefore, In order to your doing good, it is indispensably necessary that what you do be agreeable to the law, and revealed will of God; for that ought to be the rule of all our actions, and whatsoever we do, is so far good or bad as it agrees with that, or differs from it: for God's will being goodness itself, no action can be any further good, than as it is conformable to that; and therefore if you would, as you should, be always doing good, you must be sure to do nothing but what God hath revealed to be his will, either expressly, or else by necessary consequence; if not in particular, howsoever in general terms, so that what you do be at least allowable by the word of God, and no way forbidden in it, or contrary to it. Hence our blessed saviour checks the *Jews* for adhering so much to the traditions of their fore-fathers, and in the mean while neglecting the commands of God. They thought that whatsoever had been transmitted to them from their ancestors by tradition, could not but be good and lawful, yea, commendable and necessary to be done; but our saviour teacheth them another lesson, *you transgress, saith he, the commands of God by your traditions*, Matt. xv. 8. Indeed it is not any old tradition nor new revelation that can infuse goodness into any action, it is only God's prescription can do it; for nothing is of his accepting but what is some way or other of his commanding: he cannot away with any thing but the performance of his own will, so that if you do any thing that agrees not with his laws, howsoever specious and plausible, howsoever good and acceptable it may seem to you, he will say to you as he did to the *Jews* for their over-multiplied fasts, and uncommanded sacrifices, *who hath required these things at your hands*, Isa. i. 12. And therefore if you would really *do good*, such as God himself will accept of, you must not look for the matter of your actions amongst the number of your own roving fancies, nor yet amongst the dictates of your own carnal reason, but amongst the precepts of God himself; *to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*, Isa. viii. 20. This is the rule which you are to square your actions by, if you would prove what is that *holy, good, acceptable*, and perfect will of God, Rom. xii. 1. *And to as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and upon the whole Israel of God*, Gal. vi. 16. Indeed they are only the truly *Israel* of God, the really good and pious persons, who walk according to this rule; proportion which maketh goodness, disproportion to it maketh sin. A thing much to be observed, especially in these days, wherein the impetuous torrent of blind zeal, and erroneous conscienciousness hath born down so many deluded souls into a will-worship, and voluntary subjection of themselves to the spurious offspring of their own distracted fancies. If the prince of darkness, or, as they call it, the light within them, do but dictate any thing to them, or, in plain terms, if they do but conceit or fancy any thing to be their duty, they presently set upon it, without searching, with the good *Bereans*, into the word of God, to see whether it be so or no. But this is the way never to do any thing that is truly good; for that we can never do, unless what we do be consonant to the will of God, and we that do it know it to be so too. And therefore if you desire ever to *do good*, you must be sure to search and study the revealed will of God, and order your conversations according to it, still remembering that God commandeth nothing but what is in itself good, and it is therefore also good because he commandeth it; and he forbiddeth nothing but what in itself is evil, and it is therefore also evil, because he forbids it.

Secondly, If you would do that which is truly good, you must not only do what is agreeable to the will of God, but you must therefore only do it because it is so; it is not enough that you do what God commands, unless you have also a respect unto his commanding of it, so as to do it only upon that account, because it is God's will and pleasure that you should do it, without which a man may do an action which in itself is good, and yet at the same time not do a good action; I mean, not such an action as God will accept of as good from men, who being endowed with reasonable souls, it is not sufficient for them to do the bare thing that is commanded them, as the sun, moon, and stars, and all inanimate creatures do, but it is necessary for us to have respect likewise to God's authority and pleasure in commanding of it, *then shall I not be ashamed*, saith David, *when I have*

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have respect unto all thy commandments, Psal. cxix. 6. which is far more than the bare performing of what God commands, and without which, nothing that we do is acceptable unto him; and this is that which the scriptures call obedience, when we do not only perform what God commands, but do it too in obedience to him that hath commanded it; of this it is, that God himself saith, *to obey, is better than sacrifice*, 1 Sam. xv. 22. Thus servants are bound to obey their masters only in obedience to the Lord, Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7. And whatsoever it is we do, howsoever good the matter of our actions be, we notwithstanding cannot be said to do good, unless we thus obey God in the doing of it; as for example, some there are whose very natures, and the constitution of their bodies, carry them in antipathy to lust and luxury; others there are, who even naturally cannot endure to drink beyond their strength, much less to unman and make themselves beasts with drunkenness; others there are who by the natural temper, or perhaps by some distemper in their bodies, are very abstemious, and love not to indulge their appetite with sensual pleasures: now abstaining from these and the like sins, upon such accounts as these are, although it be good, as it is commanded by God, yet it cannot be called so, as it is performed by them, unless, together with the stream of their natural disposition, there run likewise a desire to please God, and to obey God, otherwise it is no more than the very brute beasts do, which always act according to the natural frame and constitution of their bodies; and therefore it must needs come short of what is required of us, who can never be said to *do good*, but only when we do it in conformity and obedience to the chiefest good; which is indeed the very quintessence of every good work; inasmuch, that howsoever great and glorious any work may seem to men, without this obedience, it will never be acceptable to God: so on the other side, there is never a work so mean, so low and contemptible in the world, but it is very acceptable unto God, if it be but done in obedience to his commands; he that gives a penny to the poor upon this account, doth a better work than others that give pounds; and we have our saviour's own word for it, *that he that gives but a cup of cold water upon this account, shall not lose his reward*, Matt. x. 40, 41. Mark ix. 41.

Thirdly, It must be done with a willing and a chearful mind, we cannot obey God's will in what we do, unless we do it with our own wills too; for what we do against our own wills, cannot but be against God's too, because it is his will and command, that we serve him *with a perfect heart and a willing mind*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. so also 1 Pet. v. 2. And therefore how specious soever our actions may appear, if there be any secret averseness or reluctancy in ourselves against the doing of them, God will not accept of them when done; because, though our hands may perform them, our hearts do not; and it is the heart God principally looks at in every thing we do, and commands that we observe what he commands, not only with our hearts, but with all our hearts, chearfully as well as willingly; so that we cannot do good, unless we rejoice to do it, Eccl. iii. 12. Thus God is said to love a chearful giver, 2 Cor. ix. 7. So also he loves a chearful prayer, a chearful hearer, a chearful receiver of the sacrament, a chearful observer of all his laws: so that not to do a good work chearfully, is to do it sinfully, and so to make it no good work; for nothing is well-pleasing to God, that is not so to ourselves too; neither can we do any thing in a right manner, unless we do it with a ready mind, and chearful heart.

Fourthly, To the performance of a good work, it is necessary also that we do it with all our might; so that you cannot wind up any action, even to the lowest pitch of real goodness, unless you put your whole strength to it, so as to do it with all your hearts and might. I confess, a christian ought to have a broken heart, but must not have a divided heart, one part for the Lord, and another for the world; one part for good, and another for evil; but as we are to love the Lord, so are we to obey his laws with our whole heart and soul, Eccl. ix. 10. Dost thou pray? *Do it with all thy might*: unite thy heart, and call in all thy scattered thoughts and affections, and command them to attend upon the Lord their maker. Dost thou hear? *Do it with thy might*: rally up and summon all the faculties of thy soul and members of thy body, to hearken to what the king of glory shall speak unto thee. Dost thou give an alms? *Do it with all thy might*: remember the poor widow that threw in but two mites into the treasury, was more accepted than they that threw in their whole bags, only because she hid it to the utmost of her power
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and they not. In a word, know this that God weighs every action in the balance of the sanctuary, and if the least dram of thy strength be wanting in the performance of it, the whole action will be found wanting; wanting goodness in itself, wanting acceptance with God, and wanting a reward for thee that dost it; and so instead of being a good work, it will degenerate into a sinful and evil act.

BUT *fifthly*, you must be sure to have right intentions in what you do, or else it can never be good; for be the matter which you do, and the manner of doing it too, never so good, if your end be bad, it will spoil all; for it is the end that specifies the action, and though a good end can never make a bad action good, yet a bad end always makes a good action bad: now the ultimate end of all our actions ought to be to *the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. and therefore whatsoever you do out of any other design, as for your own credit, applause, profit, or the like, it argues you that do it to be evil, and makes your actions so.

HENCE in the next place, howsoever great or good any of your actions seems to be, you must have a care of priding yourselves in it, but still you must keep your hearts possessed with a due sense of your duty unto God, and of your own defects in the performance of it, so as to be still humble in your own eyes; for if thou art proud of any good work thou dost, by that means it immediately ceaseth to be good, and there are three ways especially, whereby thou mayst discover thy priding thyself in any thing thou dost.

First, WHEN thou conceitest it to be the work of thine own hands, when thou beginnest to say with *Nebuchadnezzar*, *is not this the bable that I have built? is not this the stately fabrick that I have raised by the greatness of mine own wisdom, and the strength of mine own hand? was not my soul the womb of this lovely offspring?* When thou art thus puffed up with the over-weening conceit of thine own abilities, when thus thou sacrificest to thine own nets, and burnest incense to thine own drags, thou mayst conclude, that high towering pride hath overwhelmed thee, and made thy action bad; for if thou conceitest that thou dost it by thy own strength, I am sure it cannot be good, it is but the fruit of a bitter root, the stream of a corrupt fountain, and if the grace of God had assisted thee in doing of it, he would have assisted thee likewise against priding thyself in it.

Secondly, WHEN thou art too forward to expose thy actions to publick view, and to send them out to court the multitude, it is a sad sign thou art proud of them; for pride may be seen in naked works, as well as in naked breasts and backs; for if thou thinkest others will like them so well, be sure thyself settest too high an estimate upon them; and therefore our saviour forewarns not to *do any thing to be seen of men*, Matt. vi. 1, 5. so that if you would do any thing that is truly good, you must imitate the silkworm, *quæ operitur dum operitur*, hides herself all the while she worketh: thou must cloath thyself with humility, and veil thine actions with the same comely garment, and that is the way to make it acceptable unto God, so as still to remember it is a certain rule, that the lower thou art in thine own, the higher thou art in God's esteem.

Thirdly, To expect salvation for thy works, and to think to merit heaven and eternal happiness by them, is a most certain sign thou art proud of them; for what greater pride can possibly be imagined, than for a silly mortal to think with the slime and mortar of his own natural abilities, to raise up a tower whose top may reach heaven? For a sinful man to think with the strength of his own hands to take heaven by violence, and with the price of his own works to purchase eternal glory; this is such a piece of intolerable pride, that whosoever is guilty of it, is so far from doing any good, that the more he doth the worse he is; for this certainly comes little short of that atrocious crime that made *Lucifer* fall from heaven, and therefore it cannot but keep men from coming thither. It is true, it is very necessary for us to do good works, but to trust in them is sinful and dangerous, and therefore, in your doing good, you must still observe your saviour's rule, *that when you have done all, still to account yourselves but unprofitable servants*, Luk. xvii. 10. as *Job* also did, *Job*. ix. 12.

IN the last place therefore, if ever you would *do good*, it must be done by faith, and there is a two-fold faith to be exerted in every good work ye do. *First*, such a faith whereby you verily believe and are thoroughly persuaded in your consciences, that what you do is lawful in itself, and agreeable to the word of God, *for whatsoever is not of such a faith is sin*, Rom. xiv. 23. And then, *Secondly*, such a faith whereby you believe that what you do is acceptable to God, in and through

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Jesus Christ; *without which faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6. And the reason is, because there are so many failures and infirmities in our very best performances, that without Christ there is more matter of damnation than of salvation in them, inasmuch that thou may'st screw up thy affections to the highest peg in matters of religion; thou may'st give thy body to be burnt, and all thy goods to relieve the poor; thou may'st pray 'till thy tongue be worn to the stumps, and fast thy body into a skeleton; thou may'st weep thine eyes out for thy sins, and bleed thy heart out for thy transgressions; thou may'st live like an angel, and die like a saint, yet after all this, if thou believest not in Christ, nothing that thou hast done will do thee any good at all, neither was it any good in itself; but this may be written as an epitaph upon thy gravestone, *here lies one that never did a good work*. Whereas, if you do but sincerely endeavour, to the utmost of your power, to act according to the rules I have now prescribed, and then trust and rely upon the promises which are made in Christ for the pardon of your sins, and the acceptance of your endeavours, God for Christ's sake will accept both of your persons and performances, Col. iii. 17.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew what it is to *do good*, and how you may always do it, even by doing such things only as are agreeable to the commands of God, and by doing them only in obedience to the said commands, with a willing heart, and a cheartful mind, to the utmost of your power, sincerely aiming at the glory of God, and not priding yourselves in what you do, but trusting only on the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ for the acceptance of what you do. Do thus; and then, altho' your works be not so perfectly good in themselves as the law of God requires, yet God for Christ's sake will accept of them as good, by reason of that perfect obedience which Christ for our sakes performed unto God; so that by this means you may be always doing good, as indeed you ought to be; for you must not think that doing good consists only in some peculiar actions, as in praying, hearing, giving alms, and the like, but it is to extend itself to every action which we do perform, so that whatsoever we do, both may and ought to be a good work. And this is the way to make it so, even by observing the rules which I have endeavoured to explain unto you from holy scriptures, concerning the several qualifications and properties which concur to the making of any action good; and whatsoever you do, wherein all these qualifications meet together, you may reckon upon it as a good work, and it will be accepted of as so in Christ; but if any one of these necessary requisites be wanting, the whole work is spoiled; for it is a general and certain rule in practical divinity, that *bonum fit ex integris causis, malum ex quolibet defectu*, all the necessary qualifications of good works are indispensibly required to the making of any work good, but any one defect makes it evil; and therefore if you would practise this noble and divine art of always doing good, you must be sure not to omit any one of all the properties which I have mentioned as requisite to the adorning of any action with acceptable goodness. And how mean and low soever any action may seem to others, if all these properties concur in it, you may conclude it, notwithstanding, to be a very good work; so that by this means your very eating and drinking, your trading and trafficking in the world may be a good work; for you may and ought to do good in the meanest and commonest, as well as the greatest and most sublime actions of your whole life. And it is both your duty and interest always to do so from one end of the week to the other, from one end of the year, yea, from one end of your lives to the other; so as not to leave the least chink or cranny of your time unstopped with good works, but as you are always to *depart from doing evil*, so you are always to be *doing good*. But such amongst you as have some dear and pleasing *Dalilah*, in whose wanton lap they would sometimes be dandled, some right eye, or some right hand which they are loath to part with; such, I say, may think this to be strange doctrine, that they must be always doing good. What saith the covetous worldling, may I never fall down and worship my blessed mammon? the times are hard, and may I not one day be carking, careful, and surfeit myself upon the cares of this world, but I must presently be condemned for a sinner? what, saith the brutish epicure, may I never screw up my pampered heart to a pitch beyond the reach of sorrow? not pass one minute of my slow-paced time in mirth, in frolicks, and delights? what, saith the slothful drone, must I be always tiring myself, and torturing my painful days in toil and travel? must I needs be always doing, yea, and good too? what, saith the jovial drunkard, must I always be denied the blessed privilege of a civil

rejoicing cup? what may I not sometimes solace myself, and drink away my cares and troubles, but must I always be tormented with this tedious work of doing good? what saith the lascivious person, may I not sometimes rejoice myself with the sweetest delicacies of love? and when the beauties of the world present themselves to the sprightly view of my youthful eye, may not I dwell one moment upon the amorous contemplation of such rare perfections? what saith the vain-glorious person, may I not set apart one week, not one day to the entailing the memory of my noble person to succeeding generations? believe me, the time I have to live is but short, and may I not spend a little of it to write my name in the everlasting chronicles of fame? such are the pleas of sinful men in behalf of their darling, but pernicious sins. They could be content to shake hands with them for some time, on condition to meet again; but to bid them adieu, farewell for ever, never to meet again, nor enjoy their pleasures more, this is a killing, a tormenting word indeed. What saith every such sinful soul amongst you, in your hearts at least, though not with your mouths, what must I never please myself again in the sweet embraces of my beloved sin? must I always be chained up to so strict and holy a life? must I never take my swing, nor use my former liberty again? this is an hard saying indeed, who can bear it? this is a life for the pure and incorruptible angels, but alas it is a work too hard, a task too difficult for frail and mortal men. It is true, it is an hard and difficult work indeed; but assure yourselves in the presence of almighty God, it is no more than what every soul here present is bound to do, even always to be doing good unto the utmost of their power. For thus saith the apostle himself from the eternal God, *therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. so that it is your duty not only to be always doing good, but to the utmost of your power to be always abounding too in the doing of it. But it seems the apostle himself knew this to be very hard to flesh and blood, and therefore adds the following motive and encouragement to it, *forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. And I shall endeavour to follow his example, and present you with such considerations, as, by the blessing of almighty God, may incite and encourage you to a continuance in well-doing, to a serious and stedfast resolution at least to begin at this very moment, and so to continue all your life long, in a religious devotion of yourselves to the service of the living God, and a constant endeavour to *do good*.

THINK therefore with yourselves what it is that you would have, what do your souls desire in the whole world: be but always doing good, and I assure you ye shall have it. Is it riches? is it honours? is it pleasure? is it peace? is it friends? is it good company? is it long life? why all these things are entailed upon all them, and only them that *do good*; and by consequence shall be made over to every person here present that doth so, and made sure unto you, not by the law of men, which is often deficient, but by the gospel of Christ, which can never fail.

FIRST, *do good*, and thou shalt be a rich man. I put this in the fore-front of all the other considerations, because I suppose it to be the strongest and most prevalent; for what do most men in the world look after but this? what is the great reason that you advise, contrive, project, and are so eager in compassing of sea and land, always troubling your careful brains; what is the reason, I say, of all this do and stir, this running to and fro in the world, but only to possess yourselves of wealth and riches? so that I think I may take it for granted, that you all desire to be rich; but let me tell you withal, it is impossible for you to be so, unless you *do good*, and as impossible for you not to be so, if you do; for, as the wise man tells you, *it is the blessing of God that maketh rich*, Prov. x. 22. It is not heaps of refined earth that can make a man rich; neither can sumptuous houses and pleasant gardens do it, which, in this respect, are no more than castles in the air, or a fool's paradise, wherein men may fancy safety or delight, but be sure can find none. No, it is nothing but the blessing, the love and favour of almighty God that maketh a man truly rich, and that be sure none hath but such only as are *do good*; but all such cannot miss of it, nor fail of being rich both here and hereafter. For godliness or true goodness hath *the promise both of this life, and also of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. And therefore, let the blind conceits of worldly-minded men be what they will, the good man is the only rich man even upon earth; for as he shall have all things hereafter, he wants nothing here. A good man he wants not the very things he hath not, whereas a sinner wants those very things he

he hath, as to the right use and enjoyment of them. And again, you'll all conclude him to be a rich man indeed that hath his whole heart's desire, that hath as much as he either doth or can wish to have : but he that truly is and doth good, he hath whatsoever he desires, for a good man be sure will desire nothing but what he hath, godliness always bringing contentment with it ; and you know the apostle's rule, *godliness with contentment is great gain*, 1 Tim. vi. 6. and more than that too, he that is truly good, not only hath what he doth, but what he can desire. I suppose, there may be many of you that hear me at this time, who are rich in this world ; but how much soever any of you have, I am sure none of you but do, or at least can desire more ; and therefore if you speak of riches, you must needs acknowledge yourselves to come far short of real saints, unless yourselves be so too. For what if ye can say, such houses, such lands, such revenues are mine ; what is this in comparison of him that can say, God is mine ? for he that can say so, as every good man may, it is impossible for him to desire more than he hath ; for if God be thine, all he is is thine, and all he hath is thine ; his wisdom thine to direct thee, his power thine to protect thee, his mercy thine to pardon thee, his all-sufficiency thine to supply thee, his grace thine to make thee holy, his glory thine to make thee happy for ever ; so that there can be no proportion at all betwixt the riches of the greatest sinner and the poorest saint in the world ; the one may have carnal, the other hath spiritual ; the one may have earthly, the other heavenly ; the one may have temporal, the other hath eternal riches ; the one may be rich in gold and silver, and such like trash, which are no further riches than as they are fancies to be so, but the other is rich indeed, rich in faith, rich in grace, rich in love to God and in good works, rich in time, and rich unto all eternity, having in possession all he doth, and in reversion more than he can desire ; and therefore if you desire to be truly rich, you must endeavour to be truly good ; you must learn to do well, for that certainly is the most profitable and gainful trade or calling that it is possible for any soul to follow. For hereby you may be certain to attain to riches, not such riches as *make themselves wings, and fly away*, but such as will give wings to you to mount up to an inheritance *incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens for you*, 1 Pet. i. 4.

SECONDLY, *do good*, and live pleasantly in the world. And I suppose I may rank a good part of you under this head ; such, I mean, whose serious study and constant work it is to paraphrase upon the various texts of pleasure and delight, who cannot endure to wear away your short-liv'd days in the fullen, melancholy, and dejected shades of sadness. To you it is I say there is no way of obtaining your desires to live pleasantly in the world, but only by *doing good* ; for they are the ways of wisdom only, that *are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17. Yea, a man cannot *do good*, unless he rejoice to do it, so that there cannot but be joy in every good act he doth. And one of the good works, which we are always to do, is to rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of our salvation ; for we are expressly commanded to *rejoice evermore*, 1 Thess. v. 16. and to *rejoice in the Lord always*, Phil. iv. 4. And therefore sadness is a mere heresy in practical religion, and no man can be good and sad too at the same time, it being our very duty to rejoice always, and that in the Lord too, who is not only the best, but the only object of all true joy and happiness ; so that one who is constantly doing good, and always walking in all the commands of God blameless, he may justly be termed a spiritual *Dives*, one that fares deliciously every day, his soul being continually transported with the contemplation of God's perfections, and his heart delighted in obeying his commands. Thus our saviour looked upon it as his meat and drink to *do the will of his father*, Joh. iv. 34. And David thought it to be *sweeter than the honey and the honey-comb*, Psal. xix. 10. Psal. cxix. 103. And I dare say, there is never a soul amongst you that hath exercised himself in doing good, but hath sometimes found more real joy, complacency, and satisfaction of mind in one good work, than in all the pleasures of the world besides ; and if these *προποτισμοι*, these proelibrations, and fine tastes of the grapes of Canaan, of heaven's glory, be so unspeakably pleasant, and so ravishingly delightful, what will the full meal be ? if one drop be so transporting, who then can express the joy which will fill our hearts, when we bathe ourselves in the rivers of pleasure, which are at God's right hand for evermore ?

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, *do good*, and thou wilt have honours, as well as riches and pleasures; and this is another thing which many of you, I know, are very ambitious of; but it is in vain for you to expect it any other way, but only by doing good. For whatsoever honour and renown you may fancy to yourselves whilst sinners, ye are certainly the vilest and most despicable creatures upon earth; but so soon as you depart from evil, and do good, then you begin to honour God; and God himself saith, *them that honour me, I will honour*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. And this is true honour indeed, to be honoured and highly esteemed, not by our fellow-creatures only, but by our greatest creator, the only fountain of all true honour. Hence he elsewhere saith, *since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable*, Isa. xlii. 4. But every one that doth good is precious in God's sight, and therefore must needs be honourable. Inasmuch, that howsoever despicable any of you may seem in mens sight, do but *depart from evil and do good*, and thou wilt be honourable: honourable in thy person, thy very presence will be grave and majestic: honourable in thy titles, being called God's *סגל*, his treasure, one of his peculiar people, a king and a priest to God: honourable in thy relations, thou wilt have God for thy father, and Christ for thy elder brother: honourable in thy free admission to the throne of grace, having constant access into the presence and favour of *the king of kings*; honourable in the communication of secrets, for the secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him; they are all, as it were, of his cabinet-council: honourable in thy supplies and maintenance, having omnipotence itself, and all-sufficiency to supply thy wants, and provide thy daily food; honourable in thy residence, thy conversation being always in heaven, and so thy residence in the court of *the king of glory*: honourable in thy train and retinue, having the holy angels themselves to minister unto thee: and honourable in thy continual employments, doing good being itself the highest and most honourable employment that it is possible for any one to be engaged in; for this is the employment of heaven, this was the employment of Christ when he was upon earth, for *he always went about doing good*, Acts x. 38. yea, this is the employment of the eternal God himself, for *he is good, and doth good*, Psal. cxix. 68. And if this be not, I know not what is, or can be accounted honour.

FOURTHLY, *do good*, and thou wilt attain to true wisdom and understanding; for this can neither be gotten nor manifested any way, but only by doing good. By this means it was that David attained to so much understanding; *I have more understanding*, saith he, *than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditations; I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts*, Psal. cxix. 99, 100. and, *through thy precepts I get understanding*, Psal. cxix. 104. I do not deny, but one in his sins may have some general notions of good and evil; but as Adam, before he had eaten of *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*, knew evil only notionally, but afterwards knew it experimentally; so as soon as ever thou departest from evil and doest good, as thou before knewest good only notionally, then thou wilt know it experimentally, thou wilt then know how good a thing it is to *do good*; yea, Christ himself hath promised to manifest himself to such a one, *John xiv. 21*. And so by doing good thou wilt come to know God and goodness experimentally here, and perfectly hereafter.

FIFTHLY, *do good*, and thou wilt have many and good friends; a thing that most desire, and therefore plot and contrive all ways to insinuate into the acquaintance, and flatter themselves into friendship with others; but all is in vain, for there is no friendship sure and lasting but what is got by fair-dealing, I mean by well-doing; by which means thou may'st have, *first*, Christ to be thy friend, and I suppose you'll all grant it is no small privilege to have a friend at court. Yea, all that *do good* have the greatest favourite in the court of heaven, the king's only son, to be their friend; *ye are my friend*, saith he, *if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you*, John xv. 14. not only that they are friends to him, but he will be a friend to them too. Nay, *secondly*, thou wilt not only have a friend at court, but the court itself will be thy friend, for God will be thy friend, and he will account thee his friend too, as he did Abraham, saying, *Abraham, my friend*, Isa. xli. 8. Oh! what astonishing mercy, what a glorious privilege is this; that if thou doest good, God should say of thee as he did of him, such or such a one, *my friend*. And if he be thy friend, all the saints and angels in heaven, all the creatures in the world shall be thy friends; *the very beasts and stones of the field shall be at league with thee*, Job

Job v. 23. yea, thy very foes shall prove thy friends, and *all things work together for thy good*, Rom. viii. 28.

HENCE in the next place, *do good*, and thou shalt have peace, a blessing peculiar to those that *do good*; for *there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked*, Isa. xlviii. 22. and the reason is, because there is no way imaginable to attain peace, but only by doing good. *Depart from evil*, saith David, *and do good, seek peace and pursue it*, Psal. xxxiv. 14. as if he should have said, the only way to seek peace and pursue it, is to *depart from evil and do good*: by this means thou wilt be at peace with thy self, with thine own conscience, yea, and with God himself; so that *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds, thro' Jesus Christ*, Phil. iv. 7. And if God be once at peace with thee, thou may'st be confident he will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; his love and favour will always stick by thee; thy riches may fail thee, thy honours may fail thee, thy pleasures, thy wisdom, thy friends upon earth, may all fail thee, but be sure God will never fail thee, but always speak peace and comfort unto thee.

LASTLY, *do good*, and thou shalt live long. This is that which I dare say you all desire; yet none can have it, but only such as *depart from evil and do good*. Hence David in my text joins these two together, *depart from evil and do good, and dwell for evermore*. Not only live, but dwell, so as to live safely in a quiet habitation for evermore: and verily, altho' the other arguments which I have produced may not have done the work, this consideration methinks should effectually excite and engage you all *to depart from evil and do good*; for I am sure here is never a soul amongst you but desires to live, yea, to live for ever; but that you can never do, unless ye *depart from evil and do good*, which if you will for the future do, I dare assure you in the name of the most high God, in whose presence you now are, you shall always live; I do not say you shall never die, but this I say, that you shall always live; one death you must undergo: death did I say? no, it shall not be so much death to you, as an entrance into a better life; though thy soul may be separated from thy body, neither soul nor body shall ever be separated from thy God; but thou shalt live in the continual contemplation and enjoyment of his divine perfections for evermore. So that if you *do good*, in time, in and through Christ, you shall both receive and enjoy all manner of good unto eternity.

Now put these things together, and consider seriously with yourselves what extraordinary advantages and benefits will accrue unto you, if you *depart from evil and do good*; how that then you will be possessed of the truest riches, transported with the greatest pleasures, invested with the highest honours, endowed with the only wisdom, beloved of the surest friends, blessed with the best peace, and advanced to eternal life. Consider these things, I say, and tell me, whether you do not really think it worth your while to learn and practise this profitable, as well as noble and pleasant art of doing good? for my part, if such considerations as these are, will not prevail upon you to do it, I know not what can. But I have more charity for you than to think that any of you are so ignorant and insensible of your own interest, as to stand out any longer against such considerations as these are; and therefore, I hope, you are already resolved within yourselves to do the best of your endeavours, for the future, *to depart from evil and do good*; which none of you but may yet attain to; for God is ready, for Christ's sake, to accept of what you sincerely do, and to assist your weak endeavours with his own grace. Do you therefore but what you can, and trust in the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ for God's assistance and acceptance of you, and neither of them will be ever denied unto you; but you will soon be enabled to do whatsoever good is required of you, and so to attain to whatsoever good is promised to you. And then what happy, what glorious creatures will you soon be? never a soul of you but what would e're long be a glorified saint in heaven. Which, that you may all be, let me advise you not to be hearers only, but doers of the word. Begin this day, this hour, to set yourselves in good earnest *to depart from evil and do good*, and then you have God's word for it, that you shall dwell with him for evermore.

S E R M O N CXLV.

Of Prayer.

ACTS x. 4.

And he said unto him, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

OF all the arts and sciences, which it is possible for any one to learn, there is none like that of doing good, the art of refining all our actions into good works, which, there is never a soul amongst us, but by nature is capable of, and by Christ may attain unto, if ye would but seriously set yourselves about it; for the scriptures do clearly discover to you the several qualifications which are necessarily required to the making of any action good; all which may briefly be reduced to these heads, that whatsoever we do be agreeable to the revealed will of God, at least no way forbidden by it, or contrary to what is commanded in it; and then that we do not only what God commands, but therefore do it, because God commands it; that all our actions proceed from a principle of obedience to the supreme governour of the world. And as what we do must be according to God's will, so we must do it with our own wills too, still observing *David's* rule, to serve the Lord with a perfect heart, and a willing mind, so as to do every thing we set upon, with all our hearts, yea, and with all our might and mind, so as to make God's glory the ultimate end of all our actions, and not to intend any thing of carnal pleasure, profit, or applause in doing of them; neither to pride ourselves in them when done, but, when we have done all, *still to account ourselves but as unprofitable servants*, and therefore rely and depend only upon the merit of Jesus Christ, for the acceptance of what we do in the sight of God, humbly confiding, that in and through Christ God will pardon the manifold imperfections of our best performances, and accept of our sincere, though weak endeavours. And if we thus do what we can, although our actions be not so perfectly good as the law of God requires, God for Christ's sake will accept of what we do as good, by reason of that perfect, extraordinary, and divine obedience, which his own son for our sakes performed unto him. By this means therefore we may do good works, such as are and will be acceptable unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

AND verily, if we mind either our present interest, or the eternal concerns of our immortal souls, we must endeavour unto the utmost of our power thus to *do good*, without which it is impossible for us ever to be happy either in this life or that which is to come; for unless we be and do good, whatsoever earthly riches we may fancy ourselves to have, we are really but poor and empty creatures, destitute of every thing that is truly good for us. Whatsoever sensual pleasures we may have to gratify our flesh, we are altogether strangers to all true joy and happiness. Whatsoever worldly honours may be conferred upon us, we are still but vile and despicable sinners; we may please ourselves with the conceit of our cunning and subtilty, but we are still mere naturals, no better than fools and madmen in God's account. And whatsoever friends we may have on earth, be sure we have none in heaven. Whatsoever outward peace we may enjoy, we can have

none either with God, or our own consciences. And though we may rub on for a while, we are continually subject both to temporal and eternal death, to have our souls separated from our bodies, and both soul and body separate from God and goodness. Whereas, on the other side, if we really be, and sincerely endeavour always to do good, nothing really evil can befall us, nothing truly good will be withholden from us; we may have no earthly, but as for heavenly and everlasting riches, we shall have them in abundance; we may have nothing to please our senses, but all things imaginable to satisfy and delight our souls; we may be despised by men, but we shall be honoured by saints and angels, yea, by God himself, who is the only fountain of all true honour. At present we may be reckon'd fools and ideots, but at long run we shall be acknowledged by all to be the wisest of men; all about us may be our enemies, but we shall have two good friends which will always stand by us, God above and our own consciences within us, with which we shall always be at peace, whatsoever bustles or tumults happen in the world; and how long or short soever our lives be upon earth, we are sure to live for evermore in heaven; so that if you be either covetous of lasting riches, desirous of satisfying pleasures, or ambitious of real honours; if you would be either instructed in true wisdom, beloved of faithful friends, blessed with inward peace, or advanced to eternal life, do good, and your desires shall be all fulfilled; yea, you will most certainly have infinitely more than as yet it is possible for you to imagine, or by consequence to desire.

Now these things being duly and truly weighed, I hope you are all resolved, by the assistance and blessing of the most high God, to be always doing good for the future unto the utmost of your power, wherein I shall endeavour, as God shall enable me, to be farther assistant to you; and for that end, having shewn you how to do good in general, for your better understanding the nature and practice of good works, I shall explain unto you some of those particular acts wherein you are all bound in a more especial manner to be always doing good; whereof you have two mentioned in my text, with a particular approbation of God himself, and they are prayers and alms, which are here recorded in a peculiar manner to be had in remembrance before God; and he said unto him, *thy prayers*, &c.

For the opening of which words we must know, that in our saviour and his apostles time, and a long while after, *Palestine* or *Judea* was subject to the *Roman* empire, and therefore was governed by a president sent from *Rome*, who resided at *Cæsarea*, at that time the metropolis of *Judea*, formerly called *Στράτωνος πόλις*, but when *Herod* had enlarged and adorned it, in honour of *Cæsar* emperor of *Rome*, he named it *Cæsarea*; it lay about sixty miles from *Jerusalem*. The *Roman* president keeping his court here, he had several soldiers under his command, and over every hundred soldiers there was a captain, who was therefore called *Centurio*, the commander of an hundred; and, amongst others, there was one *Cornelius*, a centurion or captain in the apostles days, about three or four years after our saviour's ascension into heaven. This *Cornelius*, centurion or captain of the *Italian* band at *Cæsarea*, although by birth he was a *Gentile*, yet, by his frequent conversing with the *Jews* in *Palestine*, he attained to the knowledge of the true God, the creator and governour of the world (as many at that time did besides him) and so he became a proselite. But we must know there were two sorts of proselites amongst the *Jews*; some were called *גר צדק*, proselites of righteousness, and proselites of the covenant; these embraced the whole *mosaick* dispensation, they were circumcised, offered, and sacrificed as the *Jews* did, and in every thing enjoyed the same privileges, as if they had been born *Jews*; the others were *גרם חושבים*, *proselyti inquilini*; these were not circumcised, nor bound to observe the ceremonial law, but only the more necessary points of the moral law; as to avoid idolatry, but to worship only the true God; not to commit fornication, murder, nor robbery, but to be just and to abstain from things strangled; which were called the seven precepts given to *Noah*, as *Maimonides* a *Jewish* writer asserts. Now such a kind of proselite was *Cornelius*, and many others in those times, and are often mentioned in the *Acts of the apostles*, under the name of *Σεβόμενοι*, devout men, or worshippers of the true God, as *Acts* xvii. 4. xiii. 43. xvi. 14.

CORNELIUS therefore, altho' he was no such *Jewish* proselite as to be circumcised, and observe all the rites and ceremonies of the *mosaick* law, and therefore was reputed by the *Jews* but as a *Gentile*, and unclean, yet notwithstanding he was so far instructed in the knowledge of the true God, that he had not only renounced

renounced his former idolatry wherein he was bred and born, but he also lived up to the light which he had received, constantly and conscientiously performing his devotions to almighty God, to the utmost of his knowledge and power, and expressing his piety towards God by his charity to the poor, as is here expressly asserted, *ver. 1, 2.* And it is very probable, that there being now a new religion started in the world, wherein the true God was worshipped, as well as in the *Jewish*, he made it his daily prayer and request to almighty God to be instructed in the right way, and directed to that religion wherein he might attain to everlasting salvation. And although he certainly could never pray nor do any good work as yet as he ought to do it, yet doing it as well as he could, God, who never fails them that do what they can, was pleased to have so much mercy upon him, as to send an angel on purpose from heaven, to direct him to one of Christ's disciples, *Peter* by name, who should tell him what he must further do. It is true, God might have given the angel commission to have told him himself, that he must believe in Jesus Christ that was crucified at *Hierusalem* a little while before, but there being ministers settled upon earth for that purpose, God chose rather to send him to one of them, to teach all after-ages, that they must not now expect revelations from heaven, to be directed in their way thither, but should apply themselves to the ministry for that end.

THE angel that was sent came to *Cornelius* at the ninth hour of the day, that is, at three o'clock in the afternoon, at which time *Cornelius* was at his devotions, *Acts x. 30.* that being antiently an hour of prayer. *Cornelius* being startled, as well he might, at the sight of so glorious a person, the angel addresses himself unto him in this gracious and comfortable language, *thy prayers and thine alms are come up as a memorial before God, and now send men to Joppa, &c. ver. 5, 6.* where we may observe how punctual the angel was in describing the person he was to send; by the city where he lodged, *Joppa*; by both his names, *Simon* and *Peter*; by his name where he lodged, *Simon*; by his landlord's calling, who was a Tanner; and by the situation of his house, which stood by the sea-side: and all, to shew how accurate we should be in matters of religion, and in whatsoever concerns our eternal happiness, as the angel here was in directing *Cornelius* to *St. Peter*, describing him by all these circumstances, lest he should be mistaken in the man, and so fail in his expectations from him; which were to know what he should further do: *he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.* From whence it is plain, that notwithstanding the extraordinary piety and devotion of *Cornelius*, who was certainly as great a moralist as ever lived, yet he had something still to do, which as yet he did not know of, without which he could never get to heaven; he must send to *Simon Peter* to be instructed in the faith of Christ; which doubtless is as clear a demonstration as possibly can be desired, that all the devotion and good works imaginable can never bring us to heaven without Christ, *Acts iv. 12.* And therefore, altho' it be indispensibly necessary that we do good works, yet we must not trust on them, but only on Christ for happiness and salvation.

BUT now for the excellency and necessity of good works, as likewise their acceptableness unto God, we have here a very remarkable instance in the first words of the angel's message to *Cornelius*, *thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God, or are had in remembrance of the sight of God,* as it is expressed, *ver. 13.* that is, God hath taken special notice of them all along, and still keeps them in his mind, so as graciously to reward thee for them. From whence it is obvious to observe, how acceptable prayers and alms are unto almighty God, and how well-pleased he is with them, and how graciously he was pleased to reward *Cornelius* for them, by directing him the way that leads to everlasting life, yea, and to send an angel from heaven on purpose to do it; whereby *Cornelius* was not only very highly honoured, by having an angel to wait upon him, and to bring this blessed message to him, but he was likewise thereby fully assured of God's special grace and mercy to him, and was so fully instructed in the way to happiness, that he is doubtless now a glorified saint in heaven. So that although his prayers and alms could not bring him to heaven alone, they, it seems were the occasion of his being directed in the way thither, as the angel intimates to him in these words, *thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.*

SEEING therefore we all, I hope, are desirous to do such works as are acceptable to him that made us, and nothing being more plain than that prayers and alms are so, I shall endeavour to search more narrowly into the true nature of them,

that

that we may all understand how to perform them so, that *our prayers and alms too may go up for a memorial before God*, as the angel here says *Cornelius's* did.

To begin therefore with prayer, a duty continually incumbent upon us, and therefore the more necessary to be rightly understood by us. And that ye may clearly apprehend whatsoever is necessary to be known concerning it, I shall shew,

1st, THE nature of it in general.

2^{dly}, THE reasons why it is so acceptable unto God.

3^{dly}, THE manner how we may so perform it, that God may accept of it.

As for the *first*, the nature of prayer in general, it is rightly defined by *Damascent* to be, *Ἀνάβασις ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεόν*, the ascent of the mind to God. When the soul lays aside the thoughts of all things else, and converses only with God, then it is properly said to pray; so that as in hearing God speaks to us, so in praying we speak to God. So that prayer hath an immediate reference to God himself, the soul at such a time applying itself only unto God. And all that we ought to think or speak in prayer may be reduced to these general heads, confession, petition, and thanksgiving.

For the first, when we speak to so glorious a majesty as God is, we ought in the first place to acknowledge and confess our own unworthiness to appear before him, or to receive any mercy from him, by reason of the manifold and great transgressions that we have committed against him. Thus *Ezra* in his prayer to God made an humble confession of his own and his people's sins, *Ezra* ix. 6, 7. Thus *David* prayed, *Psal.* li. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. and *Daniel*, chap. ix. 3, 4, 5, &c. And that this prayer of *Daniel* was very acceptable unto God is plain, in that it was no sooner got to heaven, but an angel was immediately dispatched from thence to certify *Daniel* that he was a person greatly beloved, and to acquaint him how his prayer was heard, *ver.* 20, 21, 22, 23. And certainly nothing is more reasonable in itself, nor more acceptable to God, than to confess our sins every time we go to him against whom they were committed.

AND as we are to confess our sins unto him, so are we to beg for mercy from him; which is that part of prayer call'd petition, which is so great a part of prayer, that it is ordinarily put for the whole. And the prayer, which our blessed saviour himself composed and stamped with divine authority, consisteth mostly of petitions or requests put up to our Father which is in heaven. Neither is there any thing whatsoever, that is truly good for us, but, if we want it, we may and ought to ask it of God, who is not only the chiefest good in himself, but the only fountain of all good to his creatures; so that whatsoever it is that we want, we are still to go to him for it, whether it be for our souls or bodies, for this life or that which is to come; and that either for ourselves, or others, *Tim.* ii. 1, 2. yea, for our very enemies, *Matt.* v. 44.

AND as we must desire of God what we want, so must we praise him for what we have, not only by giving him formal thanks for such or such mercies which he hath bestowed upon us, but especially by magnifying and extolling his great and all-glorious name, by confessing and acknowledging him to be the supreme possessor and disposer of all things, that every good and perfect gift comes from him that is above. Hence, in the *Hebrew*, the usual word for thanksgiving is *תורה*, which properly signifies confession, because the thanks we give to God for the mercies we have received from him consists principally, in confessing that it is from him alone that we have received them. And this is the only way likewise whereby it is possible for us to praise God, even by acknowledging him to be what he is, a God infinitely great and glorious in himself, infinitely good and gracious in his Son to all that love and fear him. Hence the same *Hebrew* word that signifies to confess, when it is referred to God, it properly signifies to praise him; as where it is said, *Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness*, *Psal.* cvii. 8. In the *Hebrew* it is, *יורו ליהוה חסדו*, *Oh that men would confess to the Lord his goodness*; that is, confess him to be good, and wonderful in his dealings to mankind. Thus the divine hymn, composed by *St. Ambrose*, begins with the proper notion of praise, *we praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord*; that is, we praise thee, by acknowledging that thou art the Lord, the supreme being and governour of the whole world. And verily this is so necessary a part of prayer, that our blessed saviour hath taught us both to begin and end our daily prayers with it, beginning

with *Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, and then ending with, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Now if we take prayer in this general sense, as it comprehends these several ways of addressing ourselves to the most high God, we must needs conclude it to be a thing very acceptable and well-pleasing to him, and that, which if rightly performed, he takes pleasure and delight in, as the wise man tells us; *the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight*, Prov. xv. 8. which also appears, in that he hath made this the only means whereby to obtain any mercy at his hands. And if you would know the reasons wherefore prayer is so acceptable unto God, I think they may be reduced to these heads briefly.

FIRST, in praying we come as near as we can to the principal end of our creation, which was to converse and enjoy communion with God, and to praise and extol his name. God was infinitely happy from all eternity in the enjoyment of his own perfections; howsoever of his infinite goodness he was pleased to make the world, and amongst other creatures to make man, and that in his own image and similitude, on purpose that he might know, admire, and praise his maker. He did not intend that you should spend your time in getting estates, gratifying your flesh, or aspiring after the impertinent applause of men, but that you should be always adoring and extolling him; and therefore, so long as you are doing any thing else, you do as much as in you lies to frustrate the end of your creation; but whilst you are praying and praising God, you do the work which you were made and at first designed for; and therefore it cannot but be a matter very acceptable to God, because you endeavour at least to fulfil his end in creating of you.

SECONDLY, hereby also you acknowledge his supremacy over and propriety in the world, by paying your daily homage and tribute of thanks to him for the blessings which you do enjoy, and by applying yourselves to him only for the obtaining of those you want. Such as are not constant and conscientious in the performance of this duty, live as without God in the world, as if they had no dependence upon him, nor were beholden to him for what they have, and so forget in what tenure they hold their estates, and what they do enjoy, or at least they do not acknowledge it; whereas by your daily praying to him for what you want, and praising him for what you have, you testify your acknowledgment that you are but tenants at will, and that he is the universal landlord, the supreme proprietor of all things, and so that you hold your estates under him, and by consequence that they are still at his disposal, and that you are bound to employ them only in his service, and according to his pleasure and command, which cannot but be very acceptable to him.

ESPECIALLY considering in the last place, that hereby you give him the glory due unto his name, which is the ultimate end of his, and ought to be of all our actions; *whoso offereth praise, saith God, glorifieth me*, Psal. l. 23. And so whosoever prays too doth the same; for hereby you do not only acknowledge his dominion over the world, and his propriety in all things in it, *that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*, Psalm xxiv. 1. but hereby you acknowledge likewise his omnipresence, that he is always present with you; his omniscience, that he always knows and hears what you say unto him; his all-sufficiency, that he is able to supply you; and his infinite grace and mercy, in that he is willing to help and succour you. And now, as God is well-pleased with himself, and takes infinite delight in the contemplation of his own divine perfections, so he cannot but be well-pleased likewise with having his perfections thus acknowledged and adored by his creatures, and in a particular manner by men, whom he was pleased to make for that only purpose to glorify him; and therefore he hath so composed our natures, that it is our happiness as well as duty to do it, so that it will be our constant work in heaven, as it ought to be upon earth.

It is no question therefore, but that prayer duly performed is a duty very acceptable unto God. But the great question is, how you and I may so perform it, that it may be acceptable to him, *that our prayers may go up*, as *Cornelius's* did, *for a memorial before God*? For howsoever acceptable prayer be in itself unto him, we must not think that he is well-pleased with every thing that goes under the name of prayer amongst us, which I think was never so much abused before, as it has been and still is in our age; for some do nothing but mutter over a company of hard words in an unknown tongue, and though they understand not what them-

selves

selves say, yet they are not ashamed to call this praying; others make a long oration, seemingly directed to the great God, of what comes next to their tongues end, and this, without any more ado, they call by the sacred name of prayer; others, if they do but read or run over a parcel of words and phrases, or hear them read, especially if they do it with some outward shew of reverence and devotion, they presently conclude they have been at prayers, yea, that themselves have done this acceptable work to God: whereas, alas! there is nothing of all this but a man may do, and yet not pray at all: for prayer is certainly the greatest work that it is possible for creatures to be engaged in; and therefore to the due performance of it there must needs be required the highest intent of the mind, the greatest composure of the thoughts, seriousness of the will, and ardency of affections, as well as the most solemn expressions of reverence and humility imaginable. So that it must needs be the hardest as well as the highest work that we can ever be employed about; neither can it ever be rightly performed without a great deal of care, study, and pains about it. For as there is a great mystery in doing well in general, so is there in praying in particular, which is an art no less difficult in itself, than it is advantageous to those that learn, and practise it: and therefore prayer is not a thing to be played with, or carried on in a careless and perfunctory manner; but as it is the best and most acceptable duty that we can perform, so it is to be performed with the greatest seriousness and devotion that we can possibly raise up our spirits to; otherwise, howsoever acceptable it be in itself, it will not be accepted from us.

WHEREFORE hoping, that as you desire to go to heaven in good earnest, so you desire also to perform this as well as all other religious duties in good earnest too, and not to content yourselves with such a formal and customary way of praying as others, and perhaps yourselves too, hitherto have done, I shall endeavour to give you some light and insight into the true nature of it at this time, and shew you how you may all perform it acceptably to the living God; for as it is my desire that every soul here present may ere long be advanced to eternal glory, so it must be my care and study to inform your judgments aright concerning the true nature of such duties as are necessary in order to it, whereof this is one of the first and greatest; and therefore I shall not put you off with vain and impertinent discourse upon so high a subject as this is, but shall endeavour to shew you in a plain and familiar way what is of absolute necessity to the due performance of it: and because I would not burthen your memories too much, I shall reduce it all to these three heads; what you are to do before, in, and after prayer, that it may be acceptable unto God, and profitable for yourselves; of which very briefly.

I. THEREFORE, you must know, that prayer is a duty of that extraordinary weight and moment, that it is not to be undertaken hand over head, without a due and solemn preparation of yourselves beforehand. If you were to speak but to an earthly prince, none of you but would consider beforehand what to speak, and how to carry yourselves before him: how much more when you go to the universal monarch of the world, the supreme governour and possessor of heaven and earth, whose glory and majesty did you but rightly apprehend, I am confident never a one of you durst have the boldness to speak unto him, without a serious consideration beforehand what to ask, and how to deport yourselves before him, but you would take pains with yourselves to bring your hearts into a fit temper and disposition for so great a work, which that you may do, I desire you to observe only these three rules.

1. LAY aside all earthly and carnal thoughts, otherwise it will be impossible for you to perform so heavenly and spiritual a duty as this is; and therefore, so soon as ever you set yourselves about either publick or private prayer, you must be sure to bid the world adieu, and not suffer your estates, your credit, your relations, nor any thing here below to molest or distract you in the performing of so solemn a duty as this is.

2. BETHINK yourselves beforehand what mercies you want, for which you should pray unto him, and what you have, for which you must praise God; as also how unworthy you are, either to retain what you have, or to receive what you want. Consider how sinful you are by nature, and how sinful you have been by practice, so as to be vile and base in your own eyes, when you appear before so pure and glorious a being as the great God is, otherwise you can neither acknowledge

knowledge rightly your former sins, nor beg mercy and grace as you ought to do, nor indeed are you fully qualified for the receipt of any blessing whatsoever, no, nor for the asking of it.

3. GET your hearts possessed beforehand with a due sense of God's transcendent excellency, greatness, and glory. Consider with yourselves, that you are now going to speak to him, by whom alone you speak; that you are now to converse with the universal being of the whole world; with him that is the fountain of all life and motion; with him who with a word of his mouth commanded thee out of nothing, and with a frown of his countenance can send thee into hell; with him that can do what he will, and will do what he can for them that truly serve him: and let such considerations as these are fill your hearts with awful and reverential apprehensions of him, and then you will be in a fit frame to appear before him, and to put up your petitions to him.

HAVING thus prepared yourselves, and brought your hearts into a fit temper, you may set upon the work itself, and present yourselves before the eternal God, and your requests unto him; wherein I desire you to observe these few directions: as *first*, all the while you are praying, still remember what you are doing, and carry yourselves accordingly, even with that lowliness and humility, that reverence and solemnity, as becometh poor sinful creatures, whilst you are praying to the great creator of the world. Thus the apostle tells you, that if you would serve God acceptably, you must do it with *reverence and godly fear*, Hebr. xii. 28. and the reason is, because our *God is a consuming fire*, ver. 29. And therefore let others sit as confidently, and speak as malapertly as they please, to the great God, they must answer for it another day: but if you desire to pray acceptably, you must do it with that inward awe and dread upon your spirits, and with all those outward expressions of reverence and godly fear, that may testify your acknowledgment of God's infinite greatness and authority over you, and your own vileness and unworthiness before him. Hence also,

II. BE sure to observe the wise man's counsel in all your addresses to the most high God; *be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, and therefore let thy words be few*, Eccles. v. 2. God is in heaven, he is a great, an infinite, an eternal, an all-glorious and incomprehensible being; heaven is his throne, and earth is his footstool. Thou art a poor silly worm, a little creeping, crawling, sinful dust and ashes, and therefore have a care what thou sayest unto him, and fear to speak any thing amiss before him. As *Abraham*, when he had been importunate with God for the saving of *Sodom and Gomorrah* from destruction; *behold now*, saith he, *I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes. Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once*, Gen. xviii. 27, 32. so careful should we be of what we speak to God, so fearful of speaking any thing mis-timely before him; for if we do, instead of accepting or answering our prayers, he will be angry and displeased with us for them: and therefore, whatsoever liberty others take unto themselves, do you remember always the distance betwixt God and you, and keep within your bounds; be not hasty to utter any thing before so great a majesty as he is.

III. HAVE a great care to keep your thoughts and affections together all the while that you are performing your devotions; as your tongues should not, so neither should your hearts run before your heads, nor your affections before your apprehensions in prayer; but the whole man, both soul and body, should be jointly engaged in the performance of it, yea, and both the faculties of the soul too; the understanding with its apprehensions, and the will with its affections. How zealous soever, or affectionate you may seem in prayer, unless your zeal be governed and regulated by your understanding, unless there be light as well as heat, it is but a blind kind of devotion, and therefore we must be sure to follow the apostle's rule, *I will pray with my spirit, and I will pray with my understanding also*, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. that is, we must keep our minds intent all the while upon the work we are doing, and our souls sensible of the greatness of that God we are praying to, the necessity of the mercies which we desire, our own unworthiness to receive them, and the like. By this means we shall perform a reasonable service unto God, and if it be not reasonable, I am sure it can be no acceptable service to him.

Lastly, PRAY in faith, desiring nothing but only in the name of Christ, for so runs the promise, *whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23.

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Indeed

Indeed we have no other ground to expect any mercy at God's hands, but only upon the account of Christ, and therefore he that goes in his own name, or trusting in his own righteousness, may justly expect a curse rather than a blessing upon what he doth; so that if you would pray to purpose, you must be sure to keep your faith firm all the while, and stedfastly fixed upon Christ, apprehending and believing him to be your advocate in heaven, presenting your prayers to the divine majesty, with the incense of his own merit and mediation, never expecting to be heard or accepted upon any other account, but only for Christ Jesus's sake, but humbly confiding, that for his sake the eternal God will pardon the sins which you confess before him, grant the petitions which you present unto him, and accept of that praise and thanksgiving which you offer him. These therefore are the most material things which I look upon as necessary to the due performance of this duty, and which I would advise you to have an especial care of in every prayer you make, even that you always pray with reverence and godly fear, that you be not hasty to utter any thing before God, let thy thoughts and affections always go together, and thy faith be continually fixed upon Christ; do but these things, and you need not fear but your prayers will be accepted and answered, so far as what you ask is truly good for you: and therefore these are the things which I would have you principally observe in prayer, without troubling your heads about the unnecessary circumstances of it, as whether your prayer be long, or short, whether you read it, or say it without book; for such things as these are not at all of the essence of prayer. The humble *Publican* certainly prayed as much, in crying only, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, as if he had prayed a whole hour together; for prayer doth not at all consist in a multitude of words, but in the attention of the mind, and the sincere desires of the soul. And whether you read or rehearse a prayer, whether you say it extempore or by premeditation, it is the same thing, if these the necessary qualifications do but concur in it. Tho' this I must say, and your own experience may teach the same, that it is far easier to pray the prayer which we know before-hand, than that which we do not know. For if I know not before-hand what to pray for next, I must either study myself what to say, or else hearken to what another will say next; and so the time which I should spend in raising my affections, and acting my faith in prayer, will be wholly taken up in studying or heark'ning, and so there will be little or nothing of prayer in it. Whereas if I understand all along what I shall next pray for, I shall have nothing else to do but to pray, that is, to raise up my soul to God, and to order my affections suitable to the matter I am upon; as I should more fully demonstrate, but that your own experience, I suppose, will save me that labour.

THESE things therefore being observed in the body of your prayers, the last thing to be considered is what you must do after prayer, that it may be accepted and answered; for which you must know, *first*, that when you have done your prayers, you must not think that you have done with them, but when you have done praying, you are then to recollect yourselves, and consider what sins you have acknowledged, that so for the future you may avoid them, and what mercies you have begged, that so you may expect them. For it is certainly one of the most ridiculous customs imaginable, crept in, I know not how, amongst us, to put up several petitions to the most high God, and never to regard whether he answer them, or no: for this is the way surely never to be answered indeed; for if we do not matter whether God answers us or no, we cannot expect he should. And then, *secondly*, you must not only consider what you have prayed for, but you must trust in Christ for the acceptance and answer of your prayers. And verily there is much more in this than people generally are aware of; for our saviour himself saith, *what things soever you desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark xi. 24. and the apostle intimates the same, *Jam. i. 5, 6*. And therefore the great work to be done after prayer is firmly to believe, that God, for Christ's sake, will accept of our sincere, tho' weak endeavours, as also that he will grant our requests, so far as they are really for his glory, and our own good. And whosoever observes these several rules before, in, and after his praying, his prayers doubtless go up *as a memorial before God*.

THESE things therefore being duly considered, I suppose you'll all grant prayer not to be so easy a duty, as it is commonly thought to be. I confess was there no more required to it, but to say, or read, or hear a company of words uttered by another, any one that could either read, or speak, or hear, might pray too. Or if a large harangue of phrases and expressions heaped together was praying, any one

that hath but a voluble tongue, and a good stock of confidence, impudence I mean, to speak what he pleaseth to the great God, might pray well enough ; but seeing nothing less than the whole soul is to be employed about it, and it consists not in words and expressions, but in our minds and affections, so as to have them wholly taken up with divine affairs, in the performance of this duty, we must needs acknowledge, that to us especially, who at the best are but sinful creatures, it is an hard and difficult work indeed. But howsoever hard it is, it is worth your while to learn and practise it, as you will all confess, if you will but seriously consider these following particulars.

First, THAT such solemn addresses to the most high God, as I have been now describing, will in a little while strangely refine and enlarge your conceptions of him, and so you will every day be more and more acquainted with him, and in and thro' Christ ingratiate yourselves with him, and by degrees be able to enjoy peace and happiness in him, and inure yourselves to a full and perfect enjoyment of him in another world. *Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee*, said *Eliphaz* to *Job*, *Job* xxii. 21. As we see by ourselves, who keeping a correspondence, and frequently conversing and discoursing together, by that means we come to be acquainted with one another. In like manner, by often praying and conversing with God in so serious a manner as this is, we shall soon become better acquainted with him, and the thoughts of him will not be so strange unto us as they were wont to be.

Secondly, THIS would also be an excellent means to keep our hearts in a continual awe and fear of him, and we shall not dare to do any thing that we know will be offensive to him ; and it would enflame our hearts also with love and affection to him, and with ardent desires after the full enjoyment of him ; for the oftner we pray thus unto him, the better we shall be acquainted with him, and the better we are acquainted with him, by so much we shall the more clearly discover his transcendent beauty, and enamouring perfections, which will soon transport our souls into flames of love unto him, and by consequence it will deaden our affections unto all things else, that we shall not lie doating any longer upon such poor and pitiful things as this world presents unto us : yea, by this means our conversations would be in heaven, and we should participate in some measure with the glorified saints and angels in their celestial joys, and should begin that work in time, which we hope to continue for ever, even praising, adoring, and enjoying him that made us : so that this is the way to have heaven upon earth, and to have some foretastes of the grapes of *Canaan*, whilst we are in the wilderness of this world, before we get a full meal of them.

Thirdly, CONSIDER also, that prayer is the most powerful and effectual means in the world to prevent all evil, and to obtain whatsoever is truly good for us. By this your fears may be all dispelled, your doubts resolved, your dangers prevented, your wants supplied, your enjoyments blessed, and your souls adorned with all true grace and glory. For what is it that prayer hath not done ? what blessing can it not obtain ? it can dissolve the very flints into floods of water, as *Moses's* did. It can shut heaven and open it again as *Elijah's* did. It can make the sun and moon stand still, as *Joshua's* did. It can raise the dead to life, as the prophet *Elisha's* did. It can stop the mouths of lions, as *Daniel's* did. It can suspend the fury of the most raging flames, as the three childrens did. It can make a fish to ship us safe to land in its own belly, as *Jonah's* did. It can obtain children, as *Hannah's* did. It can conciliate the favour of princes to us, as *Nehemiah's* did. If we lack wisdom, by prayer we may get it, *Jam.* i. 5. If we be sick, by prayer we may be recovered, *Jam.* v. 15. If our sins be many and great, by prayer we may have them pardoned ; *I said I would confess my transgressions to the Lord*, said *David*, *and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin : for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be heard*, *Psal.* xxxii. 5, 6. If our lusts be strong and prevalent, by prayer we may have them weaken'd. If our graces be weak and infirm, by prayer we may have them strengthen'd, *2 Cor.* xii. 8, 9. What shall I say ? there is no evil whatsoever, which we either feel or fear, but by prayer it may be removed ; no good whatsoever, which we either want or desire, but by prayer it may be obtained. Yea, so powerful and prevalent is prayer, duly performed, with almighty God himself, that he cannot, at least he will not, deny us any thing that we sincerely pray for, having a promise from him, *ask and ye shall have*, *Matt.* vii. 7. Inasmuch, that when *Israel* had sinned in making and worshipping the molten

molten calf, and God was ready to destroy them for it, *Moses* stepped in, and interceded for them, and prayed him to divert his wrath from them; whereupon God said unto him, *let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them*, *Exod. xxxii. 10.* *Let me alone*, a strange expression! intimating as if he could not do it as long as *Moses* prayed so earnestly for the contrary; as if he could not strike them so long as *Moses* prayed him to hold; as if prayer could tie the arms of omnipotence itself; and yet this is no more than what our saviour himself intimates in the parable of the unjust judge, who could not but at length hearken to the petition of the importunate widow, *Luke xviii. 1, 2, 3.* so great is the power and efficacy of devout prayer, for the obtaining of whatsoever good things we sincerely desire at the hands of almighty God.

AND shall I need now to use any more arguments to persuade you to the constant and sincere performance of this duty, which is no less effectual with God than it is acceptable unto him? or do you now think it possible to gain so much in an hour's time by your trades, or in your shops, as you may do by praying? surely you cannot think it. And therefore I shall say no more, hoping that you all understand yourselves, and what you have heard, better than to live any longer in the neglect of this duty, which if you do, the *Papists* will rise up in judgment against you; for they punctually observe each day their hours of prayer according to their manner of devotions. The *Turks* will rise up in judgment against you, for they constantly pray five times a day, and, besides their private devotions, they reckon them little better than atheists, that are not once or twice a week at least in their mosques, or temples. The *Pagans* will rise up in judgment against you; for, though they knew not the true God, they constantly prayed to such as they thought to be so. And therefore have a care of yourselves, and as you excel all these in knowledge, so be sure to excel them in practice too; and do not only pray oftner than heretofore, but endeavour to do it better too, both in publick and private, observing the rules which I have now explained, that so *your prayers may go up as a memorial before God.*

S E R M O N CXLVI.

Of Alms-giving.

ACTS X. 4.

Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

ALTHO' the oracles of God were committed only to the *Jews*, yet by their means many of the *Gentiles* also came to the knowledge of the true God; such especially as lived among or near the *Jews*, some of which embraced the whole *Jewish* religion with all its rites and ceremonies belonging to it; of which sort were *Uriah the Hittite*, *Herod the Idumaean*, *Onkelos the Chaldee Paraphrast*, and several others. These being circumcised, were no longer called *Gentiles* but *Jews*, though not by birth but by profession. Others there were who attained to the knowledge of the true God, the same which the *Jews* worshipped, so as to worship none but him, and to observe the more weighty mat-
ters

ters of the law, as justice, mercy, and the like; of which sort there were many in all ages and countries too where the *Jews* lived, but not being circumcised, they were still reputed *Gentiles* and unclean, and therefore were not permitted to come within the sacred limits of the temple, but they prayed only in the outward court, where at the three great festivals oxen and sheep used to be sold, which was therefore called, *atrium gentium sive immundorum*, the court of the *Gentiles* or unclean persons: which surrounded the second court where the *Jews* prayed, and was divided from it by a little low wall of stone, which, as *Josephus* saith, was called *γέρας*, that is, a fence, whereby the *Jews* were separated from the *Gentiles*.

OF these *Gentile* profelytes we have frequent mention in the *new testament*, but the most remarkable of them were two soldiers, both centurions or captains of companies, both very eminent for their piety towards God, and their charity towards man. The one was in our saviour's time at *Capernaum*, who expressed his piety and charity by building of a synagogue or place of prayer, *Luke* vii. 1, 2, 5. which was a clear demonstration of his worshipping the true God, in that he dedicated a place on purpose for it, wherein himself and the devout *Gentiles*, as well as the *Jews*, might perform their devotions to him that made them. For tho' the *Gentiles* might not pray among the *Jews* in the cathedral, as I may so call it, even the temple of *Hierusalem*, yet they might in private churches or synagogues, or else questionless they would never have built any, as we see this centurion did. And it is observable, that this man's piety and charity, which he exercised to the best of the knowledge he had yet attained to, were the occasion of his being directed, yea, and commended too to Christ, and afterwards of his believing in him. Yea, his faith was so eminent, that it was not only approved, but highly applauded, commended, and admired too by Christ himself, as being greater than he had found among the *Jews* themselves, *ver.* 6, 7, 8, 9. From whence give me leave to observe by the way, how well pleased the great God is to see us live up to the best of our knowledge, be it more or less; for here we see this centurion, born and bred a *Gentile*, yet attains to some knowledge of the true God, and serving him as well as he could, God was so well pleased with him, that he directed him to the only way that leads to life, giving him faith in Christ, so that to this day, yea and for ever, he is recorded for an eminent believer, having this infallible testimony from Christ himself, *that he had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

THE other centurion was *Cornelius* at *Cæsarea*, who in like manner with the former was a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, that gave much alms to the people, and prayed unto God always, *Acts* x. 2. so that he is commended here by God as much as the other was by Christ, and received too the same gracious recompence of reward as the other did. It is true, Christ did not speak unto this in person, as he did to the other, because he was now ascended, but he sent an express to him, by no less a person than an angel from heaven, to direct him how to attain to everlasting salvation. The express which the angel brought and delivered to him in a vision, was briefly this; *thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God; and now send men to Joppa, &c.* So that the end of his coming was plainly to direct *Cornelius* to the faith of Christ. But then what need the angel have mentioned his prayers and his alms? questionless it was only for this end, that we might all know how acceptable these duties are to almighty God, who took such special notice of them, as they were performed by *Cornelius*, that he gave it in commission to his angelical ambassador to acquaint *Cornelius*, *that his prayers and his alms were gone up for a memorial before God*, and that they were the occasion of this his unspeakable mercy to him, in shewing him the way to eternal life. For which he was likewise honoured so far, as to be the first *Gentile* that after our saviour's ascension was converted to the christian faith; yea, so that by him the gate of heaven was opened to all *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*. For which end, about the same time that *Cornelius* had a vision commanding him to send for *Peter*, *Peter* had a vision too, giving him commission to go to *Cornelius*. For hitherto it was not lawful for the *Jews* to converse with the *Gentiles*; but *Peter* now was clearly admonished in a vision from God not to make any scruple of it, nor to account any man for the future unclean. For now the legal or typical sanctity was abolished, and God had cleansed or accounted all other nations and people as clean as the *Jews*; all which is intimated in *Peter's* vision, *ver.* 9, 10, 11, 12.

HENCE therefore by this, the miraculous conversion of *Cornelius* to the christian faith, the distinction between *Jew* and *Gentile* ceased. The *Gentiles* being now admitted

mitted into society or fellowship with the *Jews*, both equally are capable of the grace of Christ, and of the benefits of his death and passion, so that Christ hath now made *Jew* and *Gentile* both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between them, as the apostle saith, *Eph. ii. 14*. In which words he doubtless alludes to the wall before spoken of, surrounding the second court of the temple, whereby the *Gentiles* were parted, or separated from the *Jews*, in performing their devotions to almighty God. This middle wall of partition, saith the apostle, is now broken down, that is, the *Gentiles* now are esteemed as holy as the *Jews*, and partake of the same liberty and privileges, as they do, there being no partition-wall now left to separate the one from the other.

HENCE therefore we may observe what special notice God takes of our prayers and alms, in that *Cornelius* a *Gentile*, performing these duties as well as he could, God was pleased in a wonderful manner to certify him that he still remember'd all his good works, and was so gracious to him for them, as to direct him the way to everlasting life, yea, and to honour him so far as to make him the first *Gentile* convert to the gospel of Christ, and that too in so miraculous a manner, that his conversion was the occasion of all other *Gentiles*, and by consequence of our admission likewise into the church of Christ; insomuch that were there no other arguments to persuade us to the diligent practice of these duties, this duly considered would be enough to prevail upon any one that seriously minds his own eternal interest, to devote himself wholly to the sincere performance of them, to the utmost of his skill and power.

WHICH that I may be still farther assistant to you in, as I have endeavoured to explain unto you the true nature and notion of prayer, the reasons of its acceptableness unto God, the way how we may perform it acceptably to him, and the manifold obligations that lie upon us to do so; so now I shall speak to the other duty here annexed to it, and that is alms; concerning which, the first thing that I would present to your consideration is the necessary connexion between these two duties, *thy prayers and thine alms*, saith the angel, *are come up for a memorial before God*, so that it seems they both went up to heaven together. And it is not for any one, but for both of them, that *Cornelius* is here commended for a devout man, one that feared God; for indeed that can be no true piety towards God, that is not accompanied with charity towards our neighbour; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen, 1 John vi. 20. The same we may say of all other acts of piety whatsoever. No man can be truly said to fear, honour, obey, or trust in God, that is not also helpful, loving, and charitable to his brother. And as for the principal act of divine worship, even prayer, it can neither be rightly performed by us, nor will it be accepted of by God, if it be severed from alms, or at least an inward disposition to distribute them. Hence our saviour in his sermon upon the mount speaks of these two duties together, and shews how they ought to be performed without hypocrisy and guile, *Matt. vi. 1, 2, 5, 6*. But why should our saviour single these two duties out, to speak so particularly to them, and join them so together in his preaching, but to teach us that we are to join them together too in our practice, even that prayer and alms still go together, as St. Paul also enjoined; upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Upon the first day of the week, that is, upon the Lord's day, when they meet together to pray, he would have 'em at that time too to give to the poor, or at least to lay something by for them. The like was expressly commanded under the law, even that none should appear before the Lord empty, but every one should bring according to his ability; for pious and charitable uses, *Exod. xxiii. 15. Deut. xvi. 16, 17*. The same was constantly observed in the primitive church both in the apostles times and after, that whensoever they met together to pray, they brought something along with them, to be employed in the service of God, and for the relief of the poor, as reckoning alms the best enforcement of prayer, and the way to obtain an answer of God; according to his own promise by the psalmist, offer unto God thanksgiving, that is, in deeds as well as words, and pay thy vows to the most high, then call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me, *Psal. l. 14, 15*. And how earnest or affectionate soever we may be in prayer to God, if we be not at the same time as charitably disposed to the poor, we may as good hold our tongues, for he hath told us how we shall speed. When ye spread forth your hands, saith he, I will hide mine eyes, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; but if ye be merciful, and relieve the oppressed,

and the like, then he will hear, *Isa. i. 15, 16, 17, 18.* And verily, all things considered, I cannot imagine with what reason we can expect that God should hear us requesting temporal, spiritual, and eternal mercies from him, if we at the same time deny our poor brother, desiring a little temporal relief only of us? and so at the same time deny not only him, but God himself, in whose name he begs it, and who hath expressly enjoined us to do it. How can we expect that he should shew mercy unto us, when we will shew none to others for his sake? or with what face can we presume to ask him to pardon our sins against him, when we at the same time will not pardon another's little injuries against us? or desire him to relieve our souls, when we refuse to relieve another's body? or how can we imagine that he should hear us, when we refuse to hear him, requesting only a little of what himself hath given us, towards the feeding and cloathing of such as he, by his providence, hath made poor and naked? surely, in such a case, the cries of the poor will be more prevalent with God for a curse, than our prayers can be for a blessing upon us; whereas if we be charitable towards others, then we shall be fitly disposed to receive charity from him. This will manifest our praises to be real, and render our prayers effectual; and tho' our single prayers may not prevail, yet when they are coupled, and enforced with alms, as they ought to be, they cannot fail of a kind acceptance, and gracious answer. Then we shall hear that in effect one day said to us, which was here to *Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.*

THE next thing I would have you to observe here is the acceptableness of alms to God, *thy prayers and thine alms*, saith the angel, intimating that God takes special notice of, and is pleased with our alms as well as prayers, with our giving to others as well as our asking from him. Not thy prayers only but thine alms *are come up for a memorial before God*; which that yours may for the future do, I shall endeavour to possess you with the right sense and notion of this duty, shewing you the nature of it, the manner of its performance, the reason of its acceptableness to God, and the obligations that lie upon us, together with the encouragements which we all have to perform it.

First, THEREFORE, as to the nature of this duty in general, it consists in the supplying of others necessities, of what kind soever they be, unto the utmost of our power, and so it is not to be restrained to any one or more particular acts, but it extends itself to every thing wherein we can be any way helpful to one another; so that in general it compriseth under it, our feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, redeeming the captive, visiting the sick, entertaining the stranger, relieving the oppressed, easing the afflicted, comforting the sorrowful, instructing the ignorant, informing the erroneous, assisting the weak, admonishing the wicked, supplying the indigent, resolving the doubtful, rescuing such as are fallen into danger, being good and kind, helpful and liberal to all unto the utmost of our power; so as not to suffer any one to be in any real want of what is necessary for them if we can help it, but to be always ready to supply others necessities out of our abundance; that is, out of such part of our estates as we have not any real need of our selves; for if we have no more than what is absolutely necessary for ourselves, we are not bound to part with any of that for the relief of another's necessities, for then we should be obliged rather to perish ourselves than to see another perish, which is contrary to the natural instinct of self-preservation; but if we have any thing more than what ourselves have real need of, as I suppose all, or most here present have, and another do really want it, then we are enjoined by the laws of God and nature, yea, by the eternal rules of justice and charity, to supply his wants out of that which thus aboundeth to us, it being supposed superfluous as to us, but necessary unto him, and this is the proper meaning and purport of these words of *John Baptist, he that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat let him do likewise, Luke iii. 11.* that is, he that hath more than himself doth really want, must impart it to him that really wants it, or at least is supposed to do so. Neither must we think this to be an arbitrary thing, left to our own choice, whether we will or will not do it; no, mistake not yourselves, you are as much bound to give alms in this sense, so as to supply others necessities, if you be able, as you are to love and fear God, to honour and obey your parents, and the like: for the same law that commands the one, commands the other too. And therefore *St. Paul* orders *Timothy* not to intreat, but to charge them that are rich in this world to do it, *1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.* charge them by their

allegiance

allegiance to God, by their love to Christ, and obedience to his gospel, as they will answer it another day, that they give what they are able to the relief of others. And lest you should think it unreasonable to be thus bound to give away any part of your estates to others, I shall endeavour to shew you the reasonableness of it, why God requires it of you, and by consequence also, why it is so acceptable to him.

First, THEREFORE, we must know that God, as he is the maker and preserver, so is he the owner too and possessor of all things in the world; so that it is not possible for us to have any thing but what we receive from him. Hence therefore he requires alms of us, only as a testimony of our acknowledgment, that it is from him alone that we receive whatsoever we have. He is your landlord, you his tenants; it is under and by him that you hold your estates; and to testify your acknowledgment of his title to, and propriety in what you enjoy, and that the reversion is still in him, and he may dispose of it as himself sees good; for this end, I say, he requires you to pay him a constant rent, homage, or tribute of what you have, to be employed in his immediate service, or else for the relief of his meaner and poorer servants, which he for this purpose hath told you shall always be amongst you, that you may always know where to pay your acknowledgment to him; and whosoever neglects or refuses to pay this easy duty imposed upon him, he thereby forfeits his right to the use of what he hath, and it ceaseth to be good for him: *for every creature of God is then only good to us, if it be received with thanksgiving*, 1 Tim. iv. 4. which thanksgiving is not only to be expressed by words, but deeds. Neither can we any way manifest our real thanks for what we possess by his favour and blessing, but only by employing it according to his command, and imparting it for his sake to such as are poor and needy. Hence, under the law, when the people brought their offering to the Lord for the maintenance of the priest and Levites, and for the relief of strangers, orphans, and widows; they were enjoined at the same time to make their publick acknowledgment of God's dominion over what they had, and of his mercy in bestowing it upon them, *Deut. xxvi. 1, 2, 10.* Yea, they were to acknowledge this their tribute of thanksgiving to God to be an hallowed and sacred thing, *ver. 12, 13.* The same acknowledgment did David make, when himself and all Israel contributed so freely and liberally towards the building of the temple, 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12, 14. And thus whensoever you give any thing to the poor, as you ought to do, you do but your duty in acknowledging of God's propriety in what he hath committed to you; and all the reason in the world, that you, who have nothing but what you receive from him, should perform the homage, and pay the rent, which he hath reserved for himself and the poor, and of what he hath entrusted with you.

Secondly, HE hath imposed this duty upon you, to make you always mindful of your dependance upon him, and your obligations to him, for what we do enjoy. A confluence of earthly enjoyments is very apt to make us forget God; it puffs men up with pride, and makes them have high and over-weaning conceits of themselves, and so to forget him that is the maker and giver of all things; *according to their pasture, saith God by the prophets, so were they filled. They were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me*, Hos. xiii. 6. Thus *Jeshurun* is said to have waxen fat, and then to have kicked, and been unmindful of his maker, *Deut. xxxii. 15, 16, 17, 18.* This God foresaw, and therefore gave them a caution against it, *Deut. vi. 10, 11, 12. chap. viii. 11, 12, 13, 14.* Hence *Agar* feared riches, and prayed against them upon this account; *give me, saith he, neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?* Prov. xxx. 8, 9. For so they, who abound in the things of this world, are too apt to speak, tho' not with their mouths, yet in their hearts, and say, *who is the Lord?* as if it was below them to regard or mind him. But now a constant and liberal distribution of what we have to the relief of the poor for God's sake, and in obedience to his commands, this will make us always mindful of our head landlord, and to lift our hearts to heaven, to remember and think of him that gives us all things richly to enjoy. They that refuse to perform this duty imposed upon them, do in effect deny God to be the giver and owner of what they have; and therefore cannot but soon forget him. But to be always doing good upon earth is the way to keep your hearts in heaven, and make you mindful of God, and of his mercy and favour to you; as our saviour also intimates unto us, where, speaking of alms, he saith, *lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, but in heaven; for, saith he, where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also,* Matth.

Matth. vi. 19, 20, 21. signifying, that without the performance of this duty our hearts can never be as they ought in heaven.

Lastly, GOD requires this duty of you, and there is all the reason in the world you should perform it, because this is the means whereby God hath provided for such persons as, for reasons best known to himself, he hath been pleased to make destitute of any other maintenance; for as God intended all along that there should be poor among us, so he still designed they should be maintained this way, even out of the charitable contributions of others, to which, for this end too, he hath given more than themselves have absolute necessity of. So that if you be able, and yet deny to relieve any one in want, you rob him of the maintenance which God hath provided, and put into your hands for him: for why should God give you more than you have real need of, but only that you might distribute it among such as do really need it? And therefore mistake not yourselves; what is necessary for the maintenance of yourselves and families is your own, but what you have over and above, as I believe there are few here present but have something, that is only deposited in your hands for the use of the poor. He that might and could have made them yours, hath made you their stewards, putting their maintenance into your hands, and therefore have a care of imbezzling of it, as also of denying it to them whose due it is; for if you do, you will not only rob the poor, but God too, as himself hath told you, *Mal. iii. 8. tithes* being for the maintenance of his ministers, and *offerings* for the relief of the poor. So that if ye would, as ye ought, pay every one their own, you must not withhold relief from the poor, whose debtors you all are, *Prov. iii. 27.*

SEEING therefore God hath been pleased so strictly to require this duty of us, and there being so much reason that we should perform it, the performance of it cannot but be very grateful and acceptable unto God. As on the other side the neglect or omission of it cannot but be very displeasing and ungrateful unto him; insomuch, that whatsoever we do unto the poor, God interprets it as done unto himself; if we despise or neglect them, he looks upon himself as despised and neglected by us; if we respect and relieve them, he reckons upon it as much as if we respected or relieved him. And so we shall find at the day of judgment, as our saviour himself tells us; *inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*, Matth. xxv. 40. and so on the contrary, *ver. 45.* Hence the wise man saith, *he that oppresseth the poor, reproaches his maker; but he that honoureth him, hath mercy on the poor*, Prov. xiv. 31. This is the reason that prayers and alms should always go together, because both have respect to God, and are both alike acceptable to him, if duly performed, as we see here *Cornelius's* were; the angel himself being witness, that his alms as well as prayers went up for a memorial before God. But as every thing which goes under the name of prayer is not truly so, nor by consequence acceptable unto God, so neither must we think, that every little alms we give unto the poor will be approved of and accepted by him, unless it be done in the manner which he hath prescribed us; for as there is a great art in praying aright, so is there in giving too: but the whole mystery of it, I think, may be reduced to these following rules.

First, WHATSOEVER you give unto the poor, you must give it purely out of obedience to God, and for his sake that first gave it you. It is not enough that you give a little now and then to them that want it; that you may do, and yet not perform this duty: for all alms, tho' they be given immediately to the poor, ought to have respect to God, which they cannot have, unless he that gives them does it out of a sense of his duty and obligations to God, and from a principle of sincere obedience to his commands. This being one great reason, as I have shewn, why God requires alms of us, that we may thereby testify our acknowledgment of his power and dominion over us, and of his right unto, and propriety in, what we have received from him. But whatsoever it is we give, if we have not respect to God in the giving of it, we make no acknowledgment of him in it, and so it faileth to be such alms as he hath required of us. Whereas, on the other side, be it never so little that we give, if we have respect to God and Christ in the giving of it, God will both accept of it, and reward us for it; as our saviour himself assures us, saying; *for whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward*, Mark ix. 41.

HENCE, in the second place, alms, properly so called, must be universal, and not confined either as to object or time; you must not give them only to such as are of your

your own humour and disposition, or of your own sect and opinion; not only to such as you have been formerly, or may hereafter be obliged to; not only to them of your own kindred, neighbourhood, or acquaintance; not only to such as you have a particular affection for, or relation to; for if you give only to such, it is not in obedience to God's command, but upon the account of these or the like circumstances, which the persons you give to lie under, that you are so charitable to them. And therefore, if you would give alms indeed, you must do it indifferently to all, or to any which you know, or think to be in want, without respecting any thing else but God's command. Neither is this a duty to be performed only now and then when you are in a good humour, or when the doleful complaints of indigent persons make strong impressions upon you, and so move you to pity and compassion towards them; or when the practice of others, in whose company you are, shames you into a compliance with them in giving; or when you have an opportunity to promote some design, or get some credit to yourselves by it. He that gives only upon such occasions as these are never rightly gives at all; for it is plain that it is the occasion only that moves him to it, without any respect to God's commands: so that he, that would perform this duty as he ought, must be constant and uniform in the practice of it, as being still induced to it, only upon this account, because it is God's will and pleasure he should do it.

HENCE also, in the next place, you must not give your alms with any reluctance and unwillingness, as if you were angry that God hath imposed it upon you, but you must do it with a *cheerful heart, and a willing mind*, Deut. xv. 10. *every man, saith the apostle, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver*, 2 Cor. ix. 7. *He that sheweth mercy with cheerfulness*, Rom. xii. 5. And verily, when you give an alms to the poor, you have more cause to rejoice that gave it, than they have that receive it, it being *more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35. for what a mercy is it, that God hath not only provided you necessities for yourselves, but hath enabled you also to supply others; wherein there is a double mercy, for which you can never be sufficiently thankful, in that you have not only wherewithal to give, but have hearts also to give it, which you are to look upon as two distinct blessings, and such as very seldom go together; for many would give if they had it, and many have it but will not give; and therefore if you have both estates and hearts also to give, you have infinitely more cause to rejoice in giving, than they have to whom you give it. And this you may be sure God takes special notice of, in every act of charity you do perform, still observing whether you give with your hearts as well as hands; which if you do not, he will not reckon it as any act of charity at all. Hence likewise, if you would give alms to purpose, you must not put off the giving of them till you die, as many are wont to do, never giving any thing to others, until they can keep nothing themselves: for altho' you may then give something in your last will and testament to the poor, thanks will not properly be due to you for that, but to your mortality: for should you never go out of the world, you would never give any thing to the poor that are in it. And therefore do not give less now, because you intend to give more when ye die. Remember it was the alms which *Cornelius* gave while living, not those he gave upon his death-bed, *that went up for a memorial before God*.

Fourthly, You must not content yourselves with giving a little out of that great abundance which God hath bestowed upon you, in comparison of what many others have, but you must be sure to give to others proportionably to what God hath given unto you, Deut. xvi. 10. *every one according as God hath prospered him*, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. For the more or less he hath given unto you, the more or less he requires from you. You cannot give more than you have, neither are ye bound to give away all you have, but every one is obliged to give according his estate, be it more or less; and as the apostle tells you, *he which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully*, 2 Cor. ix. 6. And it is observable, that our saviour seeing the rich men cast in much money into the treasury for their offerings, and a poor widow cast in but two mites, he said, that she had *cast in more than all*; because they of their abundance had cast in but a little in comparison of what they had, but she had cast in all her livelihood, that is, all that she could possibly spare from her own necessary maintenance, or perhaps all she had in the world at that time, Luke xxi. 1, 2, 3. giving us to understand, that how little soever a man gives, if it is but as much as he is able, it shall be accepted, when theirs shall not, who give much more, but not proportionably to what they have,

Luke xi. 41. And therefore, in your practice of this duty, be sure to observe this rule, even always to proportion your charity to your estates; otherwise God may justly proportion your estates to your charity; and you that will not give as much as you are able, shall be able to give no more than you do.

THE last thing that I would commend to your observation, in every distribution of your alms, is, that you would be sure to have a care not to do it out of any such low and pitiful design, as to procure credit and applause from men, nor yet to think to merit any thing by what you do from God, but to depend only upon Jesus Christ for his acceptance of it. Do not prostitute so high and noble an act as this is to such a mean and base design as vain glory is. This your saviour himself hath forewarned you of, *Matt. vi. 1.* I add farther, be not so simple and ridiculous as to fancy that you can merit grace or glory from God by giving a little money to the poor. Such gross conceits will corrupt your best works, and make your charity itself as bad as simony; for as *Simon Magus* proffered money for the gift of the Holy Ghost, so you would give money for heaven and eternal glory. It is true, if you give alms aright, God will reward you for it, but not out of debt but mercy; not as if you could deserve any thing from him, but only because he will be gracious to you for Christ's sake. And therefore, when you have given and done all you can, you are still to observe your saviour's rule, *to account yourselves but unprofitable servants*, so as to depend upon his merit and mediation only, for the acceptance of what you do, humbly confiding, that God for his sake will be well pleased with it. For which end likewise, every time you give an alms, I would advise you also to act your faith on Christ for its acceptance, lifting up your hearts to God at the same time, and saying within yourselves, "Lord accept of this my acknowledgment of thy undeserved goodness to me, for Christ Jesus sake."

Now how much, or how little soever you give unto the poor, if all these, the necessary qualifications of real charity, concur in it, that is, if you give only in obedience to God, or for the sake of Christ; if you give impartially to all sorts of objects, and constantly at all times, without respect to persons or seasons, if you give with a chearful heart and a ready mind; if you give proportionably to what you have as much as you are able; and, when you have done all, believe in Jesus Christ only for the acceptance of what you have done; do this, and you will do *a work very acceptable unto God*, and that which will go up for a memorial before him; so that as he remembers your prayers, so as to hear and answer them, so will he remember your good works; your alms too, so as to reward you for them out of his own free grace and mercy. Hence, when *Nehemiah* had expressed his charity in so plentiful a manner to the house and people of God, he said, *remember me, Oh my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy*, *Neh. xiii. 22.* not for the greatness of my charity to others, but for the greatness of thy mercy unto me. And thus we see how God of his infinite mercy remember'd the alms as well as the prayers of *Cornelius*, so as to send an angel to acquaint him with it, *thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God*. And verily, were there no other, this, one would think, is encouragement enough for any sober and considerate person to set immediately upon this work, upon charity, *the queen of graces*, as the fathers used to call it; for what greater blessing can you desire in the world, than to have the supreme governour of it well pleased with what you do, as he will most certainly be, if ye will but give alms as ye ought to do. This is the way wherein you may follow your saviour's counsel, *in making you friends by the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations*, *Luke xvi. 9.* For if you be constant and sincere in the distribution of your alms to the poor and needy, the greatest persons in the world will become your friends; God the Father will be your friend to pardon and protect you; God the Son will be your friend to mediate and intercede for you; God the Holy Ghost will be your friend too, to comfort and assist you; yea, and all that are truly pious, which are the most noble persons in the world, will respect and honour you. But tho' this be the greatest encouragement imaginable to the performance of this duty, yet fearing many of you may not think it so, I shall back and enforce it with some others. And, indeed, which way soever we turn our eye, it will present us with such considerations, moving and engaging us to bounty and charity, that he deserves not the name of a christian, nor scarce of a man, that refuses or neglects the practice of it. If we look above us, there we may see the eternal God expressly requiring and commanding it from us, as an acknowledgment of his dominion over

us, and our subjection unto him. If we look beneath us, there is a poor brother, endowed with the same nature, adorned with the same faculties, capable of the same privileges and happiness with ourselves, yea, every way equal to us, only he wants a little such trash as the world calls riches; and shall we deny him so inconsiderable a thing, when his wants and necessities require it of us? If we look upon ourselves, we are beggars as well as he, and live upon alms as he doth. Our frail and mean condition, as well as God's command, requires us to pray always, and beg for our daily food, and shall we think much to extend our mercy unto others, who stand in so much need of mercy and relief ourselves? and if we look about us upon the temporal enjoyments which God hath conferred upon us, they also supply us with convincing arguments of the necessity, usefulness, and excellency of this duty. But this being the argument, which, if duly considered and understood, will make the most vehement impressions upon you, I shall explain it a little further to you; for which end I desire you to consider, that as there is none of you but have more or less of the good things here below, if I may call them so, so there is none of you, I suppose, but would willingly employ, preserve, and make a good improvement of what you have. But that you can never do, but only by the constant exercise of this duty, this being the only way that riches are capable of being rightly used, preserved, or increased.

First, As to the proper use and employment which riches can be put to, it is certain, there neither is nor can be any other but this: riches are properly χρήματα, things to be used; neither are they any farther riches than as they are some way or other useful for us. Whatsoever it is wherein you fancy yourselves rich, if you make no use of it, you are never the better nor richer for it. Silver and gold, if hoarded up, is no more to you than when it lay in the mine; for it is all one, whether you have it not at all, or to no purpose. You may imagine yourselves to be rich, and others, as wise as yourselves, may repute you to be so; but you may as well think yourselves, or be thought by others, to be good, as to be rich, for the having of such things which ye never use, and so dispossess yourselves of them. Neither is it possible for you to enjoy, or employ what you have, any other way but by imparting, what yourselves have not absolute necessity of, towards the relief and support of others. For setting aside what is necessary for the maintenance of yourselves and families, all the rest, if not employed this way, will either turn to no account, or else to a bad one. You must either make no use of it at all, or else abuse it by throwing it away upon your lust and luxury, pride, ambition, or the like; by which means it will prove mischievous, prejudicial, and destructive to you. Whereas if you disperse it among the poor, you will then put it to the proper use which it was at first designed for, and for which God entrusted it with you; for with part of it you supply your own, and with the rest you will relieve others necessities, and so the whole will become useful either to yourselves, or others.

THIS also, in the next place, is the only way to preserve, as well as to employ your estates, a thing which I am confident you all desire; for having taken perhaps a great deal of pains to get an estate, you would keep it as long as you can, and, if possible, never be deprived of the use and comfort of it. But assure yourselves there is no such way of preserving what you have gotten to yourselves, as by imparting it to others. For you have no security at all for it, so long as you have it in your own possession, but are in continual danger of being robbed or cheated of it, or of losing it some way or other. There are a thousand ways whereby God can take it from you in a moment, and indeed you tempt him to do so, by refusing to pay that tax or tribute, which he hath imposed upon you for it. So that there is no way imaginable to insure what you have got, but by a free and liberal distribution of it to the use of the poor; for by this means you will lodge it in the hands of omnipotence itself, a place where no deceit, no guilt, no rapine, no moth, no corruption, no misfortune whatsoever can come near to it, as your saviour himself hath signified to you, *Matt. vi. 19, 20.* and the reason is, because *he that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again, Prov. xix. 17.* So that what you have is only God's in your hands, but what you give is your own in his hands. What you have, God hath lent to you to lay out for him; but what you give, you lend to God to lay up for you; and you have his own infallible word for it, that he will be faithful to you, and pay it you again. And how is it possible then, that you should have any security for your money comparable

comparable to this of transmitting it by the poor into the bank of heaven, where you will certainly find it another day, with infinitely more interest and increase, than here you can desire, or imagine.

AND the last thing I would have you to consider is, that this is the only way of encreasing your estates; for returning it by alms into God's hands, you will not only have a sure pay-master, but one that will return it again to you with extraordinary use and interest for it. An hundred for one is the common rate he gives at present, but ten thousand times ten thousand, yea, infinitely more in the life to come, as himself assures you, *Matt. xix. 29.* So that nothing less than eternal life will be freely given to you, if you do but freely give towards the temporal livelihood of others. Which that you might be the better persuaded to do, Christ hath told you before hand, how he will proceed at the great day, when your actions must be all strictly scanned, and your lives reviewed; assuring you, that he will enquire principally into your performance of this duty, and accordingly pass his final sentence upon you, advancing the kind and liberal to eternal happiness, but condemning the covetous and unmerciful to everlasting torments, *Matt. xxv. 34, &c.* And the reason of this his preferring mercy at that day, before all other graces or virtues, is, because all that we can expect at that day is merely of his mercy and bounty, which they are altogether unworthy of, and unfit for, who would shew no mercy unto others, *for he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy,* *Jam. ii. 13.* Consider these things, and then tell me, whether it be not your wisdom and interest, as well as duty, to follow *Cornelius's* example, in giving much alms to the poor. And do you go and do likewise, otherwise I assure you, all your profession of religion will avail you nothing, there is nothing of true religion in it, *Jam. i. 27.* Away therefore with those lip-services, and outward shews of piety, which cost you nothing. If you would manifest yourselves to be religious in good earnest, to be christians indeed, let your hearts be always enlarged towards God, begging mercy to yourselves, with your hands continually opened to the poor, shewing mercy unto them. Let prayer be your daily exercise, and alms your constant recreation, solacing yourselves in refreshing and relieving others. This is to be religious to good purpose, and that you will find another day; for when all your other works shall be forgotten, and your labours lost, these will be upon the file in heaven, where you will find, to your endless comfort, that your *prayers* and your *alms* are kept as a memorial before God.

Four SERMONS preached on particular occasions, published by the Author in his Life-time.

SERMON I.

The Excellency and Usefulness of the Common-Prayer.

Preached at the opening of the Parish-Church of St. Peter's, Cornhill, the 27th of November, 1681.

I COR. XIV. 26.

Let all things be done to edifying.

WHEN Judas Maccabeus had new-built the altar, and repaired the temple at *Jerusalem*, after it had been polluted and laid waste for three years together; the church of God at that time and place rejoiced so much at it, that they kept the dedication of it eight days, and ordered that the same should be observed every year, 1 Mac. iv. 59. And so we find it was in our saviour's time; for he himself was pleased to honour that festival, tho' only of ecclesiastical institution, with his own presence, *John* x. 22. In the like manner we of this parish have cause to be transported with joy and gladness, and to spend this day in praising and adoring the most high God, for that our church, which hath lain waste for above five times three years, is now at last rebuilt and fitted again, for his worship and service. For what the altar and temple were unto the *Jews* then, the same will our church be unto us now. Did they there offer up their sacrifices unto God, as types of the death of Christ? we shall here commemorate the said death of Christ, typified by those sacrifices. Did they come from all parts of *Judaea* to worship God there? so shall we, I hope, come from all parts of this parish, to worship God here. Was the temple an house of prayer to them? so is this church to us. Was that the place, where God, according to his promise, came unto his people to bless them? I do not doubt but he will do the same to us in this place, if we come unto it, and carry ourselves in it, as we ought to do. In short, was the temple the place where all things were performed that could any way conduce to the edifying of God's people, as things then stood? the same may be said of our church, as things now stand: for whatsoever is, or can be, necessary to the edifying of our souls here, and so to their eternal salvation hereafter, is clearly and fully comprehended in those several offices, which, according to the laws of the land, are now to be performed in this place. Neither is there any thing contained in any of them, but what doth really conduce to these great ends and purposes.

BUT this being a thing which is denied by some, and understood but by few amongst us, I shall endeavour to explain and demonstrate it unto all; which I chuse to do at this time, because it is the most proper subject I could think of for this occasion. For unless what is to be now done in this place will answer the ends for which it is erected, all the costs and charges that have been laid out upon it, will be to no purpose at all: but if it can be fully made out, that the service, which is here to be performed, doth highly conduce to the advancement of God's glory and your happiness, the great end wherefore such places are erected; then you cannot but acknowledge, that whatsoever any of you have contributed towards it, is the best money that ever you spent; and that this day, wherein the said service is begun to be performed in it, is one of the most joyful days that this parish ever saw.

THIS therefore is that which I shall endeavour to prove at this time: and for that end I have chose these words, for the ground and foundation of all that I shall say upon this subject, *let all things be done to edifying*. For the right understanding whereof we must know, that the apostle having in this chapter discoursed at large, concerning the way and manner of holding christian assemblies, and having proved, that whatsoever is there said ought to be spoken in such a language, that all there present may understand, and so be edified by it; he at last sums up the whole in this proposition, *how is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation: let all things be done unto edifying*. As if he should have said, whatsoever gifts any of you have, or pretend to, yet when you meet together upon a religious account, for the publick worship of God, take special care that all things be there done, to the edifying of all who are present. From whence it is plain, that the apostle lays down this as a general rule, necessary to be observed in all christian congregations: so that whensoever we meet together to worship and serve God, if any thing be there done which is not for our edification, we come short of this rule, and so we do too, if any thing be there wanting that may conduce to that end: for, according to this rule, as nothing is to be there done but what is for our edifying, so also on the other side, all things that are, or can be for our edifying, ought to be there done.

BUT for our better understanding the true sense and purport of this rule, it is necessary to consider what the apostle here means by *edifying*. For which we must know, that all christians being, as the same apostle saith, *of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone*, Eph. ii. 19, 20. Hence whatsoever tends to the strength'ning, supporting, cementing, or raising this fabrick higher, whatsoever it is whereby men are made more firm and solid christians, more holy and perfect men than they were before, by that they are said to be *edified*. And therefore it is a great mistake for men to think, as many do, that they are *edified* by what they hear, merely because they know perhaps some little thing which before they were ignorant of: for *knowledge*, as the apostle saith, *puffeth up*, it is *chirity that edifieth*, 2 Cor. viii. 1. And therefore, whatsoever knowledge we attain to, we cannot be said to be *edified* by it, any farther than as it influences our minds, excites our love, and inclines our hearts to God and goodness. And that this is the true notion of *edifying*, is plain from the apostle's own words, where he saith, *let no corrupt communication come out of your mouths, but that which is for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*; Eph. iv. 29. For from hence it is manifest, that that only is properly said to *edify*, that ministers grace unto us; whereby we are made more pure and holy than we were before: and therefore we read of *edifying ourselves in love*, Eph. iv. 16. and *building up ourselves in our most holy faith*, Jud. ver. 20. which are the two graces that make up a real and true christian; and nothing can be said to *edify*, but what tends to the exciting and increasing of them: *until we come*, as the apostle saith, *in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*; Eph. iv. 12, 13. Hence therefore, when the apostle saith, *let all things be done to edifying*, his meaning, in brief, is this, that in all our christian assemblies, when we meet together to worship and serve God, all things there are to be so done, that we may return home wiser and better than we came thither; with our knowledge of God and Christ increased, our desires enlarged, our love enflamed, our faith confirmed, all our graces quickened, and so our souls made more humble, more holy, more like to God than they were before.

THE words being thus briefly explained, I shall now apply them to our present purpose, and shew, that that form of religious worship, which is prescribed by our church established by the laws of the land, and therefore to be used now in this place, agrees exactly with this rule, or canon of the holy apostle, even that *all things in it are done to edifying*.

BUT before we prove that that form in particular, which our church hath prescribed, is agreeable to this apostolical rule, it is necessary to prove first, that the prescribing a form in general is so: for unless the prescribing a form in general be according to this rule, no form in particular, that is prescribed, can possibly agree with it. But now, that this rule admits, yea, requires the prescribing of some form, is evident from the rule itself; for the apostle here commands the church of *Corinth*, and so all provincial churches, to take care, that in their religious assemblies *all things be done to edifying*. But how is it possible for any provincial church to see that this be done, except she prescribes some certain form for the doing of it? If every minister of a parish should be left to his own liberty to do what he pleaseth in his own congregation, altho' some, perhaps, might be so prudent as to observe this rule as well as they could, yet, considering the corruption of human nature, we have much cause to fear that others would not; at least, the church could be no way secure that all would, and therefore must needs be obliged to consider of, and appoint some such form to be used in all her congregations, by which she may be fully assured, that this apostolical rule is every where observed, as it ought to be. And altho' we should suppose, what can never be expected, that all the clergy in every province should be as wise and as good as they ought to be, yet it cannot be supposed that every one of them should understand what is for the edification of the people, as well as all together. And therefore it must needs be acknowledged, that the surest way to have this rule observed, is, for the governours of every church, and the whole clergy, to meet together by their representatives in a synod or convocation; and there, upon mature deliberation, agree upon some such form, which they, in their prudence and consciences, judge to be according to this rule which the apostle here lays down before them.

AND, besides that the prescribing a form in general is more for our *edifying*, than to leave every one to do what seems good in his own eyes, we have the concurrent testimony, experience, and practice of the universal church: for we never read, or heard of any church in the world, from the apostles days to ours, but what took this course. Though all have not used the same, yet no church but have used some form or other. And therefore, for any man to say, that it is not lawful, or not expedient, or not edifying, to use a form of prayer in the publick worship of God, is to contradict the general sense of christianity, to condemn the holy catholick church, and to make himself wiser than all christians that ever were before him; which, whatsoever it may be thought now, was always heretofore reckoned one of the greatest sins and follies that a man could be guilty of.

NAY, more than all this too: for this is not only to make a man's self wiser than all christians, but wiser than Christ himself; for it is impossible to prescribe any form of prayer in more plain and express terms than he hath done it, where he saith, *when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, &c. Luke xi. 2.* And I hope none here present but will acknowledge, that Christ, by whom alone we can be edified, knows better what is, or what is not for our edification, than we, or all the men in the world can do. And therefore, seeing he hath not only prescribed a form of prayer for his disciples to use, but hath expressly commanded them to use it, we, who profess ourselves to be his disciples, ought to rest fully satisfied in our minds, that using of a form of prayer is not only lawful, but much more for our edifying, than it is possible for any other way of praying to be.

THE same may be proved also from the nature of the thing itself, by such argument, which do not only demonstrate that it is so, but likewise shew how it comes to be so. For, first, in order to our being edified, so as to be made better and holier, whensoever we meet together upon a religious account, it is necessary that the same good and holy things be always inculcated and pressed upon us, after one and the same manner. For we cannot but all find by our own experience, how difficult it is to fasten any thing that is truly good, either upon ourselves or others; and that it is rarely, if ever, effected without frequent repetitions of it. Whatsoever good things we hear only once, or now and then, tho' perhaps upon the hearing of them, they may swim for a while in our brains, yet they seldom sink down into our hearts,

hearts, so as to move and sway the affections, as it is necessary they should do, in order to our being edified by them. Whereas, by a set form of publick devotions, rightly composed, as we are continually put in mind of all things necessary for us to know or do, so that is always done by the same words and expressions, which, by their constant use, will imprint the things themselves so firmly in our minds, that it will be no easy matter to obliterate or rase them out; but do what we can, they will still occur upon all occasions: which cannot but be very much for our christian edification.

MOREOVER, that which conduceth to the quick'ning our souls, and to the raising up our affections in our publick devotions, must needs be acknowledged to conduce much to our edification: but it is plain, that as to such purposes, a set form of prayer is an extraordinary help to us; for if I hear another pray, and know not before-hand what he will say, I must first listen to what he will say next: then I am to consider, whether what he saith be agreeable to sound doctrine, and whether it be proper and lawful for me to join with him in the petitions he puts up to God almighty; and if I think it is so, then I am to do it: but before I can well do that, he is got to another thing; by which means it is very difficult, if not morally impossible, to join with him in every thing so regularly as I ought to do. But by a set form of prayer all this trouble is prevented; for having the form continually in my mind, being thoroughly acquainted with it, fully approving of every thing in it, and always knowing before-hand what will come next, I have nothing else to do, whilst the words are sounding in mine ears, but to move my heart and affections suitably to them, to raise up my desires of those good things which are prayed for, to fix my mind wholly upon God, whilst I am praising of him, and so to employ, quicken, and lift up my whole soul in performing my devotions to him. No man that hath been accustomed to a set form for any considerable time, but may easily find this to be true by his own experience; and by consequence, that this way of praying is a greater help to us than they can imagine, that never made trial of it.

To this may be also added, that if we hear another praying a prayer of his own private composition or voluntary effusion, our minds are wholly bound up and confined to his words and expressions, and to his requests and petitions, be they what they will: so that at the best we can but pray his prayer. Whereas, when we pray by a form prescribed by the church, we pray the prayers of the whole church we live in, which are common to the minister and people, to ourselves, and to all the members of the same church: so that we have all the devout and pious souls that are in it, concurring and joining with us in them; which cannot surely but be more effectual for the edifying, not only of ourselves in particular, but of the church in general, than any private prayer can be.

Lastly, IN order to our being edified by our publick devotions, as it is necessary that we know before-hand what we are to pray for, so it is necessary, that we afterwards know what we have prayed for, when we have done: for I suppose you will all grant, that all the good and benefit we can receive from our prayers is to be ultimately resolved into God's gracious hearing, and answering of them; without which they will all come to nothing. But there are two things required to the obtaining an answer of our prayers; first, that we sincerely and earnestly desire good things at the hand of God; to which, as I have shewn, a set form of prayer conduceth very much: and then, secondly, it is required also that we trust and depend upon God for his granting of them, according to the promises which he hath made unto us, in Jesus Christ our Lord. And I verily believe, that one great reason why men pray so often to no purpose is, because they do not take this course: but when they have done their prayers, they have done with them, and concern themselves no more about them, than as if they had never prayed at all. But how can we expect that God should answer our prayers, when we ourselves do not mind whether he answers them or no, nor believe and trust upon him for it? for certainly, trusting on God, as it is one of the highest acts of religion that we can perform, so it is that which gives life and vigour, virtue and efficacy to our prayers; without which we have no ground at all to expect they should be answered: for God having promised to answer our prayers, except we trust on him for his performance of such promises, we lose the benefit of them, and by consequence our prayers too. And therefore, as ever we desire that he should grant us what we pray for, when we have directed our prayers to him, we must still look up, Psal. v. 3. expecting and hoping for the return of them.

Now

Now as this is a thing of great consequence, so a set form of prayer is a greater help to us in it, than it is commonly thought to be. For if we hear another utter a prayer *ex tempore*, which he never said, nor we heard before, nor ever shall do it again, it is much if he himself can remember the tenth part of what he said; how much less can we that heard him, do it? and if we can possibly remember what we prayed for, how is it possible for us to expect it at the hands of God, or to depend upon him for it? But now it is quite otherwise when we use a set form of prayer; for by this means, when we have prayed, we can recollect ourselves, look over our prayers again, either in a book or in our minds, where they are imprinted; we can consider distinctly what we have asked at the hands of God, and so act our faith and confidence on him, for the granting every petition we have put up unto him, according to the promises which he hath made us to that purpose. And as this is the surest way whereby to obtain what we pray for, it must needs be the most edifying way of praying that we can possibly use.

THESE things being duly weighed, I shall now take it for granted, that the using a form in general in the publick worship of God is agreeable to this apostolical rule, *let all things be done to edifying*; and so shall proceed to shew, that that form in particular, which our church hath appointed to be used upon such occasions, is so too. For which end it is not necessary that I should run thro' every particular word, phrase, or expression in the *common-prayer*, much less that I should vindicate and defend it from every little exception that ignorance and malice may make against something in it: for nothing ever yet was, or can be said or written, but something or other may be said or written against it, either well or ill. But my business must be to prove, that the form of divine service contain'd in the book of *common-prayer*, which is now used in the church of *England*, conduceth so much to the edifying of those that use it, that it agrees exactly to the rule which the apostle here prescribes in that case. And this I shall demonstrate from four heads.

- I. FROM the language.
- II. FROM the matter or substance of it.
- III. From the method.
- IV. FROM the manner of performing it.

FOR if it be edifying in all these respects, it must needs be acknowledged to be so in the whole; there being nothing in it, but what may be reduced to some of these heads.

I. THEREFORE, as to the language, you all know the whole service is perform'd in *English*, the vulgar and common language of the nation, which every one understands, and so may be edified by it. And this indeed is the ground and foundation of all the benefit that we can possibly receive from our publick prayers: and therefore, in the church of *Rome*, the common people are made incapable of being edified by the prayers of the church, in that they are all made in *Latin*, a language which they do not understand; so that when they meet to worship God, there are seldom any in the congregation that know what is said there, except the priest that reads it, and oftentimes not he neither: by which means they have no such thing really amongst them as *common-prayer*; neither is it possible for the common people to be ever edified by what is there said or done, except they could be once convinc'd by it of the horrible abuse which their church puts upon them, in commanding all her publick devotions to be perform'd in an unknown tongue, directly contrary, not only to the rule of my text, but to the design of this whole chapter.

BUT, blessed be God for it, it is not so with us: for ours is truly *common-prayer*; for it is written and read in that language which is common to all the congregations in the kingdom, and to every person in each congregation. So that all the people of the land, whatsoever rank or condition they are of, may join together in the use of every thing that is in it, and so be jointly edified by it; especially, considering that it is not only all in *English*, but in common and plain *English*, such as we use in our common discourse with one another; there are no unusual or obsolete words, no hard or uncouth phrases in it, but every thing is expressed as clearly and plainly as words can do it: so that the meanest person in the congregation, that understands but his mother-tongue, may be edified by it as well as the greatest scholar.

BUT that which is chiefly to be considered in the language of the *common-prayer* is, that it is not only common, but proper too: though the words there used are but

common words, yet they are so used, that they properly express the things that are designed by them. This, I confess, may seem to be no great matter at first sight, yet it is that, without which we might be subverted by that which was intended for our edification: for impropriety of speech in matters of religion hath given occasion to all, or most of the schisms, errors, and heresies, that ever invested this or any other church, as might be easily demonstrated. Hence the apostle gave Timothy a form of sound words, and charged him to hold it fast; *hold fast, saith he, the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me*, 2 Tim. i. 13. as knowing, that except the words, whereby he expressed divine truths, were sound and proper, it would be impossible for his notions and opinions of the things themselves to be so. And certainly, if ever there was a form of sound words, composed by men since the apostles times, our Common-Prayer may justly deserve that title, it being made up of such fit and proper, such sound and wholesome words; and if we do but hold fast to them, there is no fear of our falling, either into heresy or schism: for they being duly considered, will suggest to our minds right and true apprehensions of all the articles of our christian religion, and so not only make us sound, but build us up strong and firm in our most holy faith. So that considering the plainness and perspicuity, the soundness and propriety of speech which is used in it, the least that can be said of the Common-Prayer is, that all things in it are so worded, as is most for the edifying of all those that use it.

II. AND as the words in the Common-Prayer are all as edifying as words can be, so, in the second place, is the matter expressed by those words: for there is nothing in it, but what is necessary for our edification; and all things that are, or can be for our edification, are plainly in it. First, I say, there is nothing in our liturgy but what is necessary for our edification; there are no such fables in it, or endless genealogies, which, as the apostle saith, minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith; 1 Tim. i. 4. There are none of those vain disputations, and impertinent controversies, which have of late been raised in the church, to its great disturbance, rather than its edification: there are no new opinions, nor airy speculations in it, which serve only to tickle mens ears, and please their fancies, and so divert their thoughts from what they are about. Look it all over without prejudice and partiality, and consider very seriously every thing that is in it, and you will find nothing asserted, but what is consonant to God's word; nothing prayed for, but according to his promise; nothing required as a duty but what is agreeable to his commands; nothing said or done, but what is grave and sober, solemn and substantial; nothing but what becomes the worship of our great and almighty creator; and therefore nothing but what we may some way or other be edified by.

AND as there is nothing in it but what is edifying, so all things that are or can be edifying, are in it: for nothing can be necessary to edify, and make us solid and perfect christians, but what is necessary either to be believed, or done, or else obtained by us. But there is nothing necessary to be known, or believed, but we are taught in it; nothing necessary to be done, but we are enjoined in it; nothing necessary to be obtained, but we pray for it in our publick form of divine service.

FOR first, as to those things which are necessary to be known, or believed, it is acknowledged by all protestants, that they are fully contained in the holy scriptures, which make a great, if not the greatest part of our divine service; and are constantly read over, the psalms once every month, the old testament once, and the new thrice every year; and all the fundamental articles of our christian faith revealed in the holy scriptures, being briefly summed up in the apostles creed: that we may be sure to keep them always in our minds, we have that creed read, and repeated always once, and most commonly twice every day in the year. And seeing the godhead of our blessed saviour, the foundation of our whole religion, hath been, and still is denied by some; lest we should be led away with the error of the wicked, every sunday and holiday we read the Nicene creed, wherein the godhead both of the son and holy ghost is asserted and explained: and that we may not entertain any erroneous opinions concerning the most holy trinity, or the incarnation of the son of God, but the true catholick faith whole and undefiled, upon certain days every year, we read that which is commonly called the creed of St. Athanasius, wherein those great mysteries are unfolded, in the most proper and perspicuous terms that they are capable of.

AND

AND as all things necessary to be believed are summarily contained in the three creeds, so they are frequently explained in the other parts of our liturgy : infomuch, that it would be easy to frame a compleat body of divinity out of the words there used ; at least, of all such things as are needful for any man in the world to believe, or know, in order to his eternal salvation.

THE same may be said also of all those things which we ought to do ; for as we here do whatsoever is necessary to be done, in order to our worship of God in this place, so we are here taught whatsoever is necessary to be learned, in order to our serving God in all other places : so that no man that frequents our publick congregations, where the *common-prayer* is used, can ever plead ignorance of any one duty whatsoever ; for if it be not his own fault, he may there be instructed in every thing which he that made him requires of him : for here, as I observed before, we constantly read the holy scripture, which, as the apostle saith, *is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly instructed unto all good works ; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.* And seeing it hath pleased the most high God to comprize his whole will, and by consequence our duty, in the *ten commandments*, hence we read them constantly every Sunday and holiday throughout the whole year ; by which means every one, that doth not wilfully shut his eyes, may clearly see, and fully understand his whole duty both to God and man : especially considering, that in your prayers themselves also there is frequent mention made of all those vices which ought to be avoided, and of all those good works which ought to be performed by us. So that we can never come to church, but we are still put in mind, both of *what we ought*, and *what we ought not* to do, that we may be saved.

AND then, as there is nothing necessary to be *known*, or *done*, but we are taught it, so neither is there any thing necessary to be *obtained*, to make us either holy or happy, but we pray for it in the *common-prayer* : for here we have the *Lord's-prayer*, a prayer composed by wisdom itself ; and therefore it must needs be the most perfect and divine prayer that ever was made. Neither do we use it only once, but in every distinct service of the church ; in our prayers before we read the holy scriptures, and in our prayer after : towards the end of the litany, and in the beginning of the communion-service, and in every office of the church besides. And the reason is, because although our saviour hath not forbidden us to use any other prayer, yet he hath expressly commanded us to say this, whensoever we pray : and therefore, in obedience to his command, our church hath wisely ordered, that in all, and every solemn address that we make to the most high God, we always say this prayer ; lest otherwise, by our transgression of his command, in omitting this, we make all our other prayers to be ineffectual. And besides, by the constant use of this, amongst our other prayers, we are always sure to use one prayer, both absolutely perfect in itself, and most acceptable unto him to whom we pray, it being a prayer of his own compoſure : so that we speak unto God in his own words, and so may be confident, that we ask nothing of him but exactly according to his will.

AND tho' all things necessary for us be virtually contained in the *Lord's-prayer*, yet our church, in conformity to the catholick and apostolical, hath thought good to add some other prayers, in which the same things are more particularly expressed and desired at the hands of our great and most bountiful benefactor ; all which are so contrived, that there is nothing evil, or hurtful for us, but we pray against it : there is no vice or lust, but we desire it may be subdued under us ; no grace or virtue, but we pray it may be planted and grow in us. Infomuch, that if we do but constantly and sincerely pray over all those prayers, and stedfastly believe and trust in God for his answering of them, and so obtain what we there pray for, we cannot but be as real and true saints, as happy and blessed creatures, as it is possible for us to be in this world. Neither do we here pray for ourselves only, but, according to the apostle's advice, we make *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men ; yea, for our very enemies*, as our saviour hath commanded us, *Matt. v. 44.* And what can be desired more than all this, to make the matter of the *common-prayer* edifying either to ourselves or others ? nothing certainly, but truth and sincerity of heart in the using of it.

I CANNOT pass from this head, before I have observed one thing more unto you, concerning the prayers in general, and that is, that they are not carried on in one continued discourse, but divided into many short prayers and collects, such as that is, which our Lord himself composed ; and that might be one reason, wherefore our
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church so ordered it, that so she might follow our Lord's example in it, who best knew what kind of prayers were fittest for us to use. And indeed, we cannot but all find by our own experience, how difficult it is to keep our minds long intent upon any thing, much more upon so great things as the object and subject of our prayers are; but do what we can, we are still liable to distractions: so that there is a kind of necessity to break off sometimes, to give ourselves a breathing-time, that our thoughts being loosen'd for a while, they may with more ease, and less danger of distraction, be tied up again, as it is necessary they should be all the while that we are actually praying to the supreme being of the world.

BESIDES that, in order to the performing our devotions aright to the most high God, it is necessary that our souls be possessed all along with due apprehensions of his greatness and glory: to which purpose our short prayers contribute very much; for every one of them beginning with some of the properties or perfections of God, and so suggesting to our minds right apprehensions of him at first, it is easy to preserve them in our minds during the space of a short prayer, which in a long one would be apt to scatter and vanish away.

BUT that which I look upon as one of the principal reasons, why our publick devotions are, and should be divided into short collects, is this: our blessed saviour, we know, hath often told us, that whatsoever we ask in his name, we shall receive; and so hath directed us in all our prayers to make use of his name, and to ask nothing but upon the account of his merit and mediation for us; upon which all our hopes and expectations from God do wholly and solely depend. Hence therefore (as it always was, so) it cannot but be judg'd necessary, that the name of Christ be frequently inserted in our prayers, that so we may lift up our hearts unto him, and act our faith upon him, for our obtaining the good things we pray for. And so we see it is in the *common-prayer*; for whatsoever it is we ask of God, we presently add, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*, or something to that purpose; and so ask nothing but according to our Lord's direction, even in his name. And this is the reason that makes our prayers so short; for take away the conclusion of every collect or prayer, *in the name of Christ*, and you may join them all together, and make them but as one continued prayer. But this would be to offer manifest violence to the prayers, by taking away that which gives them all their force and energy, and so making them ineffectual to the purposes for which they are used: for certainly, the asking of all things in the name of Christ, as we do in the *common-prayer*, is the only way whereby to obtain what we desire, and by consequence the most edifying way of praying in the world.

III. THE next thing to be considered in the *common-prayer* is the *method*, which is admirable, and as edifying, if possible, as the matter itself. This none can deny, who doth but fully understand, and seriously consider of it: which therefore, that you may all do, I shall briefly run thro' the whole, and give you what light I can into it, that you may clearly see, not only the reasonableness, but the excellency of it all along. For which purpose I shall instance only in such things which offer themselves, at first sight, to any one that doth but cast his eye upon it.

LET us therefore suppose a congregation of sober and devout christians (such as we all should be) met together to perform their publick devotions to almighty God, every one of which hath lift up his heart privately unto him already, imploring his aid and assistance in the performance of so great a work, and so are all now ready to set about it. The first thing we do, is to read some sentences of holy scripture, that so we may begin our devotions unto God in his own words: and they are all such sentences as put us in mind of our sins against him, and of his promise to pardon them if we repent; that so we may present and carry ourselves with that reverence and godly fear before him, as becometh those who are sensible of their own vileness and unworthiness to approach so great a majesty: and likewise, with that faith and humble confidence, which becometh those who believe that he, upon our repentance, will pardon our sins, and accept both our persons and performances, according to the promises which he hath made unto us.

THEN follows a grave *exhortation*, concerning the end of our present assembling, which is of great use, and ought never to be omitted: for men generally are apt to rush into the presence of God, without ever considering what they go about; whereas, this *exhortation* puts us upon considering the greatness of the work which

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we are now engaged in, and so upon composing our thoughts, and preparing ourselves for the due performance of it.

OUR minds being thus brought into a right frame and temper for it, we all, both minister and people, prostrate ourselves before the most high God, confessing upon our knees the manifold sins and wickedness that we have committed against him: which confession is so contrived, that all and every person in any congregation whatsoever may join in it; for it runs in general terms, and yet so too, that every particular person may, and ought in his own mind to confess and acknowledge his own sins, which he knows himself to be guilty of: as where we say, *we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done*; at the saying of this every one should call his own sins to remembrance, and what duties he knows himself to have omitted, and what vices he knows himself to have committed, and confess them accordingly unto God. And when we have thus confessed our sins to God, we presently implore his mercy in the pardon of them; and his grace, that for the future we may forsake them.

AND whilst we are thus upon our knees, humbly confessing and bewailing our sins before the Lord our God, the minister stands up, and in the name of God declares and pronounceth to all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel, *the absolution and remission of all their sins*: which, though spoke also in general terms, yet every particular person there present ought to apply it to himself, so as to be fully persuaded in his own mind, that if he doth but sincerely repent, and believe the gospel, he is perfectly absolved from all his sins by God himself, according to the promises which he hath made unto mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord.

AND now looking upon ourselves as absolved from our sins, upon our repentance and faith in Christ, and, by consequence, as reconciled to God, we take the boldness to call him Father, humbly addressing ourselves to him in that divine form of prayer which he himself hath given us. Which done, we lift up our hearts and voices unto God for his assistance of us in what we do, in the words of *David*; the minister crying out, *O Lord open thou our lips*; and the people answering, *and our mouths shall shew forth thy praise*. The minister again, *O God make speed to save us*; the people, *O Lord make haste to help us*: and then immediately we all lift up our bodies to stand upon our feet, and so put ourselves into a posture of praising and magnifying the eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for his infinite goodness and mercy towards us; for which purpose the minister first saith, or sings the *gloria patri*, *glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*; and the people, to shew their consent, answer, *as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen*. But not thinking this to be enough, the minister calls upon the people again, saying, *praise ye the Lord*; and the people answer, *the Lord's name be praised*: and then we go on to praise him together, saying or singing the ninety-fifth psalm, *venite, exultemus Domino*; *O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation*, &c. and so proceed to the psalms appointed for the day; after every one of which, to testify our belief in the most sacred trinity, and our acknowledgment of that infinite love and goodness, which every one of those divine persons hath manifested unto us, we repeat that incomparable hymn, *glory be to the Father*, &c.

OUR hearts being thus raised up to God in praising and admiring him, we are now in a fit temper and disposition to hear what he shall speak unto us; and therefore have a chapter read out of the old testament; and that in its ordinary course, except upon sundays and holidays, when more people attending the publick worship of God, than can conveniently come upon other days, we read some select chapter proper for the day, and such as is judged most edifying to all that are there present. And having thus heard God speaking unto us his holy word, we presently fall upon praising him again for so unspeakable a mercy, saying or singing, in the morning, the *Te Deum*, one of the most heavenly and seraphick hymns that was ever composed by men; or else the *song of the three children*; which is nothing but a paraphrase upon that which *David* sang so often upon earth, and which the holy angels sing continually in heaven, even *Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord*. Wherein we being all sensible how far short we ourselves come of praising God sufficiently, we call upon all the creatures of the world to do it, *bless ye the Lord, praise him, and magnify him for ever*. In the afternoon we sing either the *magnificat*, or else the

ninety-eighth psalm ; both which being taken out of God's own word, cannot but be very pleasing and acceptable unto him.

AFTER this, our souls being got upon the wing again, and soaring aloft in the contemplation of the divine perfections, we are now rightly qualified to hear and receive the sublime mysteries of the gospel ; and therefore have a chapter read to us out of the new testament. After which, we being revived with the good tidings of the gospel, and filled with admiration at the infinite goodness of God therein revealed to us, we break forth again into praising and adoring of him in the song of *Zacharias*, or else the hundredth psalm, in the morning ; and at evening, either the sixty-seventh psalm, or else the song of old *Simeon*, still concluding with *gloria patri*.

NOW having thus heard some part of the word of God read to us, and expressed our thankfulness unto him for it, to signify our assent, not only to what we have heard, but to the whole scripture, we all, with one heart and voice, repeat the apostles creed, wherein the sum and substance of it is contained ; and so profess ourselves to continue in the number of Christ's disciples, and that, as we were at first baptized, so we still believe in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, God blessed for evermore.

HITHERTO we have been mostly taken up with confessing our sins to God, imploring his mercy in the pardon of them, hearing his most holy word, acknowledging his goodness to us, and praising and magnifying his name for it : by which means, except we have been extremely wanting to ourselves, our hearts cannot but be so united and fixed upon God, that we are now rightly disposed to make known our wants, and present our petitions before him. This therefore is the next thing we set upon : but seeing that neither minister nor people can possibly do it aright, without the assistance of God himself, therefore each of them first pray for his special presence with the other ; the one saying, *the Lord be with you* ; the other, *and with thy spirit*. And then immediately falling down upon our knees, we adore and supplicate each person of the most blessed trinity to have mercy upon us ; *Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us, Lord have mercy upon us*. After which we address ourselves to God in the words that he hath put into our mouths, saying the *Lord's-prayer* ; which ended, the minister and people by turns lift up their hearts to God in some short and heavenly ejaculations, striving, as it were, to out-vye each other in prevailing with the almighty to pour down his blessings upon us : and then, in an humble and solemn manner, we join together in supplicating his divine majesty for his grace and favour, his defence and protection, his mercy and blessing, for ourselves, for the king, for the royal family, for his church, and for all mankind. And thus we do ordinarily in the collects appointed for that purpose : but upon *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*, (upon which days the primitive church used to perform their more than ordinary devotions) as also upon the *Lord's-day* in the morning, we do it in the litany, and in such a litany as comprehends all and every thing, that we can ever need to desire of almighty God, either for ourselves or others.

AFTER this, upon sundays and holidays, we proceed to the *Communion-service* ; and therefore, approaching to the Lord's table, we begin it with his own prayer : and after another short prayer to God, to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his holy spirit, we read the *ten commandments*, which he hath enjoined us to observe ; and after every commandment we ask God mercy for our transgression thereof, for the time past, and grace to keep the same for the time to come, saying, *Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law*. And then, after a prayer for the king, and the collect for the day, we read the *epistle* and *gospel*, that is, most commonly a short paragraph taken out of the canonical *epistles*, and another out of one of the holy *gospels* ; which was the ancient way of reading the scripture, before it was divided into chapters. And we do it now, to prepare us the better for the communion of the body and blood of Christ, therein revealed to us. But seeing we neither do, nor can read over the whole, we repeat the substance of it in the *Nicene creed* ; which it is very necessary we should do at this time, that so we may demonstrate ourselves to be christians, and so capable of receiving the most holy communion.

HE that all this while hath employed himself as he ought to do in the service of our church, cannot but find himself strangely edified by it. Yet howsoever, that nothing may be wanting that may any way conduce to our edification, after the *Nicene creed*, our church hath appointed a *sermon* to be preached ; which if sound, plain, and practical, as it ought to be, cannot but be very edifying too.

AND

AND now we may be well supposed to be so far edified, as to be raised up to the highest pitch of devotion that we can arrive at in this world, and so are fit to be admitted to the highest ordinance of the church, the sacrament of the Lord's supper: and therefore we now betake ourselves to it. But that we may not appear before our Lord empty, we first offer up something to him of what he hath bellow'd upon us, to be disposed of to pious and charitable uses; testifying thereby our acknowledgment of his goodness to us, and that we have nothing but what we receive from him. And to excite and encourage us to do this, all the while that we are offering, we have some select sentences of scripture read to us, wherein God either commands us to be charitable, or else promisseth a blessing to them that are so. And then we pray for *Christ's whole church militant here on earth*; whereby we profess ourselves to be real members of it, and desirous to hold communion with it in Christ's mystical body and blood. And so we proceed to the celebration of it; in which the *method* is so clear, so apparently edifying, that I need not say any thing of it: but shall only observe two things in general concerning it.

First, THAT the sacrament of the Lord's supper being the highest mystery in all our religion, as representing the death of the son of God to us, hence that place where this sacrament is administer'd, was always made and reputed the highest place in the church. And therefore also it was wont to be separated from the rest of the church by a skreen or partition of net-work, in latin *Cancelli*, and that so generally, that from thence the place itself is called the *chancel*. That this was antiently observed in the building of all considerable churches (for I speak not of private oratories or chapels) within few centuries after the apostles themselves, even in the days of *Constantine* the great, as well as in all ages since; I could easily demonstrate from the records of those times. But having purposely waved antiquity hitherto, I am loth to trouble you with it now. But I mention it at present, only because some perhaps may wonder why this should be observed in our church, rather than in all the other churches which have lately been built in this city. Whereas they should rather wonder, why it was not observed in all other as well as this. For besides our obligations to conform as much as may be to the practice of the universal church, and to avoid novelty and singularity in all things relating to the worship of God; it cannot be easily imagin'd, that the catholick church in all ages and places, for thirteen or fourteen hundred years together, should observe such a custom as this, except there were great reasons for it.

WHAT they were, it is not necessary for us to inquire now. It may be sufficient to observe at present, that the *chancel* in our christian churches was always looked upon as answerable to the holy of holies in the temple; which, you know, was separated from the sanctuary or body of the temple, by the command of God himself. And that this place being appropriated to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, it ought to be contrived, as may be most convenient for those who are to partake of the blessed ordinance. But it must needs be more convenient for those who are to enjoy communion with Christ, and in him with one another, in this holy sacrament, to meet together as one body, in one place separated for that purpose, than to be dispersed, as otherwise they would be, some in one and some in another part of the church: or, in short, it is much better for the place to be separate than the people.

FURTHERMORE, it is not only convenient, but in some sense necessary, for every communicant to observe and take special notice of the several circumstances which our Lord hath ordained to be used in this sacrament, as the breaking of the bread, and the consecrating both that and the wine, to represent his death, the breaking of his body, and the shedding of his blood for our sins; that so our hearts may be the more affected with it, and by consequence our souls more edified by it. But this cannot be so well done, except there be a place set apart for it, where they may all be placed, about or near the *communion-table*, and so behold what is there done at the consecration of the elements. Hence also it is, that the seats there are, and ought to be so ordered, that all that are in them may still look that way, and contemplate upon their blessed saviour, there evidently set forth as crucified for them.

THE other thing that I would observe unto you concerning the holy communion, is this, that our church requireth, or at least supposeth it to be administer'd every Lord's day and every holiday throughout the year, as it was in the primitive church: for that is the reason that the *communion-service* is appointed to be used upon all such days, and to be read at the *communion-table*, that so the minister may be thereready to administer it unto all that desire to partake of it; which shews the
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great care that our church hath of all her members, that they might be edified and confirmed in the faith: to which nothing contributes more, than frequent communion at our Lord's table; which if people could once be persuaded to, they would soon find greater benefit by it than I can express, or they themselves, till then, imagine. I shall say no more of it at present, but only this, that I am so sensible of what I now say, that could I be sure to have a sufficient number of communicants, I should be heartily glad to administer the holy sacrament every Lord's-day, both for their sakes and my own too.

THUS I have given you a short scheme of that excellent method wherein our divine service is performed; which whosoever rightly considers, will need no other argument to convince him, that it is according to the apostle's rule, very edifying indeed.

IV. THE last thing to be considered in it is the *manner* of its performance; by which I mean only the several postures of the body, as standing and kneeling, which are used in it; for they also are done to edifying.

WHILE we say or sing the hymns and psalms to the glory and praise of God, we stand up, not only to signify, but to excite the elevation of our minds at that time: for as on the one hand, if our souls be really lift up in the praises of God, our bodies will naturally lift up themselves, to accompany them as far as they can towards heaven: so on the other hand, the raising up of our bodies helps towards the raising up of our souls too, by putting us in mind of that high and heavenly work we are now about; wherein, according to our weak capacities, we join with the choir of heaven, in praising God now, as we hope to do it for evermore. For this cause also we stand at the creeds; for they being confessions of our faith in God, as such they come under the proper notions of hymns or songs of praise to him; all our praising God being really nothing else but our confessing and acknowledging him to be what he is in himself, and to us. And besides that, by our standing at the creeds and gospels, we signify our assent unto them, and our readiness to defend them, to the utmost of our power, against all opposition whatsoever. And as for the gospels particularly, they contain the very acts which our Lord did, and the very words which he spake when he was upon earth; and therefore we, who profess him to be our Lord and master, cannot surely but stand up, when we hear him speaking, and listen diligently to those gracious words which proceed out of his divine mouth.

AND as, when we praise God, we raise up ourselves as high as we can towards heaven, so, when we pray unto him, we fall down as low as we can towards the earth, not daring to present our supplications to the absolute monarch of the whole world, any other ways than upon our knees; which is so proper, so natural a posture of supplicants, that if all men would but duly consider what they do when they pray to almighty God, the church need never have commanded them to kneel at that time; for they could not chuse but do it; no, not altho' the place where they are should seem ever so inconvenient for it: for we find our blessed saviour himself kneeling at his prayer in the garden upon the bare ground, *Luke xxii. 41.* and *St. Paul* upon the sea-shore, where he could have no other cushion but stones or sand, *Acts xxi. 5.* Howsoever, to take off all those little excuses that men are apt to make for themselves in this case, the seats in this church are so disposed, and all things so prepared in them, that there can be no inconvenience at all in it, but rather all the conveniences for kneeling that can be desired. And therefore, if any one of you shall neglect to kneel, while the prayers are read, you will give us too much cause to call your religion into question, or to suspect you have none at all; for if you had, you durst not, you could not offer such a manifest affront to the great creator of the world, as to carry yourselves no otherwise while you pray to him, than as if you were conversing with your fellow-creatures. But why do I speak of such persons praying unto God? it is too much to be feared they do not pray at all, nor come to church for any better purpose, than only to see and be seen. I am sure they perform no act of external worship of adoration unto God, nor shew him that respect and reverence which is due unto him; and so give very great offence to all pious and devout christians.

WHEREAS if all and every person in the congregation would always be upon their knees, while they put up their petitions to the most high God, what a mighty advantage would this be, not only to every one in particular, but to the whole congregation in general? for as every one would by this means keep his heart more

stedfast in the true fear and dread of God, and likewise more certainly obtain the good things he prays for, as the fathers frequently assert, so the whole congregation also would be very much edified by it : for by this means we should excite and enflame each other's devotions, confirm and strengthen one another's faith, and convince both ourselves, and all that see us, that religion is indeed a serious thing, and that we believe it to be so, by our serving God with so much reverence and godly fear, as this humble posture representeth. And therefore, as you tender the love of God, the credit of religion, or the salvation of your own souls, I beseech you all, in the name of him that made you, that whensoever you come hither to pray unto him, you do it in that awful, lowly, and solemn manner, which our church commandeth, and as becometh creatures, when you speak to your great and almighty creator ; that so you may give true worship and honour unto him, and also receive that benefit and edification to yourselves, which he hath promised, and you expect from your publick prayers : this being certainly the most edifying posture that you can possibly use upon such occasions.

FROM what hath been hitherto discoursed concerning the language, the matter, the method, and the manner of performing the divine service, as contained and prescribed in the book of *common-prayer*, we may positively conclude, that it agrees exactly with the rule in my text, even that *all things in it are done to edifying* ; which was the thing I undertook to prove. I know that many other arguments might be brought to shew the excellency and usefulness of the *common-prayer* ; but these already produced, are sufficient to convince any sober and considering christian of it. And if there be any here present, who are not yet convinced by what they have heard of it, I desire only one thing of them, and that is, that they would but make trial of it for a while ; for my charity prompts me to believe, that all the zeal that some express against the *common-prayer*, and all that indifferency that is in others for it, proceeds only from their ignorance of what it is, or at least from their want of an experimental knowledge of it : for let any man that seriously minds the worship of God, and the salvation of his soul, before all things else ; let such a one, I say, set himself in good earnest to use the *common-prayer*, as he ought to do, for some considerable time, and I do not doubt, but that by the blessing of God he will find such benefit and edification by it, that his own experience shall convince him of all that I have now said, more than all the arguments that I have, or any man in the world can ever produce to him. Some perhaps may think this to be a paradox, but I do not question, but that many here present can attest it upon their own knowledge, having found themselves more confirmed in their faith, more settled in their religion, more humbled for their sins, more supported under their troubles, more inflamed with love to God, and desires of heaven, every way more edified by the constant use of the *common-prayer*, than they could ever have believed it possible to have been, except they had found it to have been so by their own experience.

Now these things being thus briefly considered, I shall observe only two things from them. The first is the extraordinary prudence, as well as piety, of our first reformers, who first compiled the book of *common-prayer*, so exactly conformable to the word of God, and the apostolical canon in my text ; which I cannot but ascribe to the same extraordinary aid and assistance from God, whereby they were afterwards enabled to suffer persecution, yea, martyrdom itself for his sake, and so to confirm what they had done with their own blood ; which certainly is no small commendation of it.

THE other thing I would observe unto you is the reason why the Devil hath had such a spight against the *common-prayer*, ever since it was first made ; for the more edifying it is to God's people, the more destructive it must needs be of the Devil's kingdom. And therefore it is no wonder that he hath all along employed the utmost of his power and policy to blast its reputation, and so to discourage and dissuade men from the use of it. And, by the permission of God, for the punishment of this ungrateful nation, he hath so far prevailed in his design, that the liturgy hath been twice cast out of the church since it was first brought into it ; once in the reign of Queen Mary, and then again in the days of King Charles I.

IN the reign of Qu. Mary you all know who were her instruments in the doing of it, even the papists : for they clearly and truly foresaw that their erroneous opinions could never be believed, nor superstitious practices observed in the nation, so long as the *common-prayer* was used ; forasmuch as there is nothing in it but what

is found and agreeable to the gospel, and so contrary to the groundless opinions which the church of *Rome* would obtrude upon the world for articles of faith. And besides that, there are many expressions purposely inserted in it, to arm us against the pope's supremacy, indulgences, invocation of saints, transubstantiation, and other popish errors; so that it would have been impossible for the *Romish* religion to be ever restored in the nation, unless the *common-prayer* was first removed: which therefore they took care to have done as soon as possible. But within a few years after, even the first of *Q. Elizabeth*, it was brought in again; and as the reformation was begun before, so from that time forward it was carried on and perfected chiefly by the means of the *common-prayer*: for it is very observable, that in the reign of King *Edward VI.* and for several years too of *Queen Elizabeth*, there was little or no preaching in most parts of the kingdom, and few then could read *English*; and yet, by the constant and general use of the liturgy, and God's blessing upon it, the whole nation was so edified in the true religion, that there was scarce one in an hundred but forsook and abhorred all popish doctrines and superstitions: which is an undeniable argument, that in this respect also it is as edifying as it is possible for a thing of that nature to be; insomuch, that so long as the *common-prayer* is used and frequented as it ought to be, it is morally impossible for popery to get any ground amongst us: but if this bulwark was once removed, which God forbid, our grand adversary would soon accomplish his malicious designs upon us, one way or other.

THIS he knows well enough, and therefore hath left no stone unturned to effect it; but what he hath done before by the papists, he afterwards brought about again by other means in the reign of King *Charles I.* for by what kind of spirit the *common-prayer* was then cast out you all know, and some of you found by woful experience. All that I shall say of it is only this, that the same spirit that then stirred up people so violently against the *common-prayer* stirred them up at the same time to rebel against their king, to take away mens estates and lives contrary to all law and justice; and at last to murder one of the most pious princes that ever lived: and whether that was the spirit of Christ or Anti-christ, God or the Devil, judge you; be sure the consequents of its being laid aside at that time were very sad: for people being deprived of that, whereby they should have been edified, were immediately tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, until at length many of them fell into the most pernicious and damnable heresies that were ever heard of in the church; yea, together with the liturgy, they laid aside all distinction betwixt sacred and common things; by which means the whole nation was in danger of being over-spread with profaneness and irreligion.

BUT blessed be the name of the most high God for it, he was once more pleased to appear for us, and in a miraculous manner to restore our *common-prayer* to his church, together with our gracious sovereign to his kingdoms. But what shall we render to the Lord for so great a blessing as this is? all that he expects, or we can give him for it, is only to make the best use of it that we can. This therefore is that which I now pray and beseech you all for the future to do: do not think it enough to be for the *common-prayer*, and to come now and then to hear it. This you may do, as many do, and yet receive no more benefit by it, than as if there was none at all to be received; which therefore can by no means be imputed to the *common-prayer* itself, but to the negligence of those that use it. Neither must you think it enough to talk high for it, or rail at those who are not so happy as to be rightly informed about it; but rather take all opportunities to inform them, and by all means possible to convince them of the excellency and usefulness of it; which you can never do so effectually, as by your out-stripping and exceeding them in virtue and good-works: for this is, and ever will be a plain demonstration, that the *common-prayer* is indeed far more edifying than those new modes of religion, which they are so unhappily seduced into. That therefore you may do this, and so both experience in yourselves, and demonstrate unto others the truth and certainty of what you have now heard, concerning the *common-prayer*, I desire you to observe these few rules in the using of it.

First, COME not to our publick prayers only out of custom, or for fashion's sake, as the manner of some is, but out of a sincere obedience to God's commands, and with a sure trust and confidence in his promises for his blessing upon what you do. For which end it will be very good, as you go to church, to bethink yourselves whither you are going, and what you are to do there, that so laying aside all other business, you may put yourselves into a right temper for so great a work.

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Secondly,

Secondly, FREQUENT our publick prayers as often as conveniently you can; the oftner you are at them, the better you will like them, and the more edified you will be by them; and therefore do not satisfy yourselves with hearing them once a week: in this city, as also in many other places of the kingdom, especially where there are cathedrals, or collegiate churches, you may enjoy the benefit of them publickly every day, and so keep your hearts continually in an holy and heavenly frame, and always live as becometh christians: and if you neglect such opportunities as are now put into your hands, you will one day wish you had not; but then wishing will do no good.

Thirdly, IF possible, come always at the beginning of divine service; otherwise you will certainly miss of something that would have been edifying to you, and perhaps of that, which at that time might have done you more good than all the rest. Neither will you lose the benefit only of part of it, but in some measure of the whole too; all the parts of it being linked together in so excellent a manner and method, that they influence and assist each other: so that nothing can be omitted either by minister or people, but the whole will suffer by it, and lose something of that virtue and efficacy, which otherwise you will find in it.

Fourthly, ALL the while that you are in God's house, carry yourself as in his special presence, and suitably to the work that you are about; standing while ye praise God, and kneeling when ye pray unto him, as our church hath directed you: for though these may seem but little things in themselves, yet they are of great consequence, both to our worshipping of God aright, and to our being edified by what we do, as I have shewed before.

Lastly, TAKE special care all along to keep your minds intent upon the matter in hand: when you confess your sins to God, do it with an hearty and sincere repentance for all the errors of your life past; when the absolution is pronounced, receive it with a firm and stedfast faith in Christ our saviour; when you repeat or sing the hymns and psalms, raise up your spirits as high as you can, to join with those above in praising and magnifying the eternal God; when the word of God is read, hearken diligently unto it, and consider seriously what he that made you faith to you, and requireth of you, and resolve, by his blessing, to believe and live accordingly: and all the while that you are upon your knees, putting up your petitions to the most high God, let your whole souls be employed in it, earnestly desiring the good things you pray for at his gracious hands, and humbly confiding on his faithful promises for the granting of them. By this means you will perform reasonable service unto God, and, by consequence, that which will be very acceptable unto him, and as profitable and edifying to yourselves: whereas they, that do not observe this rule, cannot be properly said to pray, or serve God at all. And therefore it is no wonder that they come to church and hear the *common-prayer* read, and yet are no way edified by it. Indeed it is impossible that they should: forasmuch as all the benefit and edification that we can possibly receive from any of our devotions depends very much upon the due intention of our minds in the performance of them; to which, as I have shewn, both a form of prayer in general, and ours in particular, is a very great help.

Do but observe these plain and necessary rules in using of the *common-prayer* (without which you cannot be truly said to use, but rather to abuse it) and you will soon find what I have said to be true, even that *all things in it are done to edifying*. And therefore I would to God, that not only you that hear me at this time, but all the people of the nation, could be once persuaded to do so. What an holy nation, what a peculiar people should we then become? how pious towards God? how loyal to our sovereign? how just and charitable to one another? for by our constant worshipping almighty God in so solemn and devout a manner as this is, our hearts will be over-awed with so great a fear of his divine majesty, that we should never dare willingly to offend him; our minds would be filled and impregnated with such a sense of his power and sovereignty, that we should honour and reverence it in those also whom he hath set over us: our souls would be raised up so much above the world, that we should not do an ill act to gain it wholly to ourselves. In short, we should be every day edified more and more in faith, in love, in humility, in self-denial, in temperance, in patience, in all true grace and virtue; and so we should grow from strength to strength, from one degree of grace unto another, until at length we arrive at glory and perfection in the highest heavens; where we shall spend eternity itself in praising and adoring the most high God; as
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for all the other mercies which he hath vouchsafed to us, so in a particular manner for our being members of such an apostolical church, wherein all things are done to edifying.

WHICH God of his infinite mercy grant we may all do, in and through our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

S E R M O N II.

Of the Happiness of the Saints in Heaven.

Preached before Queen MARY at *White-Hall*, the 12th of *October*, 1690.

COLOS. i. 26.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

ALTHOUGH the greatest part of the numerous offspring, which hath hitherto proceeded from *Adam's* loins, be departed out of this life, and are seen no more among us, yet we must not therefore think that they are ceased to be, or to live; for still their souls are as really alive in the other world, as we are now in this. And as it is with us here, that some live ill, and others well; so it is with them too, only in an higher degree: for some, and as we have just cause to fear, the greatest part of them live with the fiends of hell in the infernal pit, where they have no light, nothing but darkness and horreur to the utmost extremity round about them; where they are always weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth; fretting and tormenting themselves at the remembrance of their former sins and follies; where, as Christ himself hath told us, *the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, Mark ix. 44. that is, their consciences, like greedy and insatiable worms, are always gnawing, and the fire of God's wrath is continually burning in their breasts, never to be quenched or abated; they cannot forbear thinking of what they have done, though every thought cuts them to their very heart, and seems ready to split them in sunder.

THEY cannot forbear looking upon God, although they can see nothing in him but the wrath and anger which they themselves have kindled; which so incenses and enrageth their minds, that they are all in a flame with fury and indignation at themselves for it: by which means they are continually, as it were, upon a rack, distorted, afflicted, distracted, confounded, hurried about from place to place, but can find no rest, no quiet; every thing is uneasy and troublesome to them, yea, they are a burden to themselves, they cannot endure themselves, but wish ten thousand times they had been better, or had never been at all, or could cease to be, or could be any thing but what they are: but all in vain. And, which is worst of all, they do not only suffer the extremity of pain and anguish at present, but

they can see no end of it; yea, they see there will be no end at all, being fully assured, that this must be their portion for ever.

WHEREAS, on the other side, there are others, who are not only free from all the miseries and torment which those poor creatures undergo, but always live in heaven, in light, and love, and joy, and peace, and glory, the highest that they are able to imagine or desire; being brisk and lively, chearful and pleasant, holy and happy all over: and that too (as we shall see more presently) not only now and then, but continually; nor for some time only, but to all eternity.

Now we, who are still upon earth, are as yet in neither of these states; neither so extremely miserable as the first are, nor so perfectly happy as those we spake of last; but, as it were, in the middle between both. But so soon as ever we depart out of this life, we shall be immediately in one of them, as certainly as we are now here. And I do not question but that you all hope for, and desire the latter, even to live with those blessed souls which enjoy perpetual rest and felicity in the other world; and that one great end of your coming hither at this time is to learn what you must do, in order to it: and verily, ye do well to take all opportunities you can get, of being assisted and directed in it; for it is a great thing that you propose to yourselves, which can never be attained without much care and pains about it. And you are not certain how long time you have to do it in, but most certain it is not very long. But blessed be God, you are all as yet in a capacity of obtaining it, and it is your own fault if any of you shall happen to miss of it: for almighty God plainly shews how desirous he is to have you live with him, and so be happy in the other world, in that he is still pleased to afford you all the means that he hath appointed for that purpose. Witness your meeting together here at this time, to join together in prayer to his divine goodness for his assistance in the pursuit of it; and to be put in mind of the course and method which you are to take for the accomplishment of so great and good an end. Concerning which therefore I shall give you the best and plainest directions I can from the words which I have now read. In which we may observe;

I. WHAT kind of persons they are, who are or shall be happy in the other world; they are *saints*.

II. THE happiness they enjoy there, here called, *the inheritance of the saints in light*.

III. THEY, who desire to enjoy that happiness, must be duly qualified for it, or, as it is here expressed, *made meet to be partakers of it*.

IV. ALL, who are so qualified, must ascribe it wholly unto God, and give him thanks for it, as we see here St. Paul doth; *giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*.

I. THEREFORE, as to the persons who live so happily in the other world, they are here called *saints*. It is the inheritance of the saints, of all the saints, and of them only; it is proper and peculiar to them, so that none else have any right or title to it, nor can ever have any part or portion in it. And that there is such a company and society of men in the world, which are truly called saints, cannot be denied by any christian; it being one of the articles of our creed, wherein we profess to believe there is a *communion of saints*; and unless we be of that communion, we can never partake of the inheritance of the saints.

BUT the great question is, what it is to be a saint? or who may be truly and properly called *saints*, men of holiness, or holy men, as the word signifies? but this we can never fully understand, unless we first state the true notion of sanctity or holiness, from whence they are so called. Now holiness and sanctity, in its highest perfection, is one of the perfections of God himself, who often calls himself *the holy one of Israel*, and sometimes absolutely, *the holy one*. And as he sometimes swears by himself, at other times he swears by his holiness, *Psal. lxxxix. 35*. whereby he gives us to understand, that he himself is holiness, *Amos iv. 2*. or, which is all one, holiness is himself, his own divine nature or essence. And that's the reason why they, who partake of his holiness, *Heb. xii. 10*. are said to partake of his *divine nature*, *2 Pet. i. 4*.

AND hence it is, that when the holy angels would celebrate the praises of the most high God in the highest manner they can, they cry, *holy, holy, holy, is the Lord*

of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory, Isa. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8. And hence also it is, that when God design'd to make man after his own image, as like him as a creature could be, he made him perfectly holy. And now, that this image is defaced in us, if it be restored again to any man, so that he becomes a new man, he is said to be created after God, that is, after the likeness of God, *in righteousness and true holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. So that this is the great perfection wherein we are at first made, and ought again to become like to God our maker, who therefore commands us to be holy, as he is holy: *as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation*; 1 Pet. i. 15. From whence it appears, that though we cannot be holy in the same measure as God is, who is so without and beyond all measure; yet we should be so, after the same manner as he is; or rather, our holiness should be of the same kind or nature with his, and as like it as it is possible for it to be.

HENCE therefore, as holiness, when attributed to God, denotes the purity and excellency of his divine nature, whereby he is exalted above all things else: so, when attributed to men, it signifies the purity and excellency of their nature, whereby they are refined and raised above the rest of mankind. This the apostle teacheth us, where he opposeth holiness to uncleanness, saying, *God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness*, 1 Thess. iv. 7. and *David*, where he calls the saints that are upon earth, *the excellent*, Psal. xvi. 3. implying, that saints, as such, excel all other persons, by reason of their holiness, that is, the highest excellency which their nature is capable of; which therefore doth not consist in any particular acts or habits, either of the soul or body, or both together, but in the rectitude, or due temperament of our nature in general. And indeed holiness, properly so called, is nothing else but that pure and excellent frame or disposition of the whole man, whereby all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body, are reduced to their primitive constitution, and become such as God at first made, and would still have them to be; exerting themselves in their respective places and offices, according to those rules which he hath set them. So that to our perfecting holiness, as the apostle speaks, in the fear of God, there is required a right and clear understanding, a sound judgment, a pure heart, an obedient will, a good conscience, and regular affections, placed every one upon its proper objects, in a due manner. And wheresoever the soul (if I may so speak) is thus all of a piece, all over such as God would have it to be, and so agreeable to his divine will, there is true holiness; and such a one may be truly said to be holy, yea, to be holy as God is holy, as being pure and excellent according to his finite capacity, as God himself is in his infinite perfections.

Now the true notion of holiness or sanctity being thus briefly stated, we may easily understand what kind of persons those be, which are here called *saints*. For, in order to a man's being a true saint, he must first have so much knowledge of God and Christ, as is necessary to the possessing of his mind with a due sense of his divine majesty, and with right apprehensions of the great mystery of our salvation by Jesus Christ. He must have a sound judgment in all things, especially in the fundamental articles of the christian faith, and in all the necessary duties required in the gospel: he must have a pure and sincere heart, in believing all those articles as revealed, and in performing all such duties as required by God: he must have a good conscience, a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men: he must have a pliable and obedient will, ready upon all occasions to chuse whatsoever his understanding, rightly informed, dictates to be good, and to refuse whatsoever he apprehends to be evil: he must keep his affections all in their proper order, fixed constantly upon such objects which they were at first fitted and designed for: he must hate, abhor, and shun all manner of sin, upon that account only because it is sin, or the transgression of God's law, and be heartily troubled that he was ever guilty of it: he must love God with all his heart and soul, and so above all things in the world besides: he must bear no grudge, hatred, malice, or ill will against any person upon earth, but love his neighbour as himself: he must hunger and thirst after righteousness, and desire nothing so much as to serve and please God, and so to have his love and favour, whatsoever it costs him: he must not fear them which can kill the body, but him only who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell: he must trust in the Lord with all his heart, and support himself under all the circumstances and occurrences of this life, with an humble confidence of his

goodness

goodness and mercy in Jesus Christ: he must rejoice in the Lord always, both when he hath, and when he hath not any thing else to rejoice in: he must be sober and temperate, meek and humble, gentle and peaceable, faithful to his word, true to his friend, loving to his enemy, charitable to the poor, kind and merciful, and just to all. In brief, he must be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that his labour is not vain in the Lord*; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

II. AND that he may be sure of; for he, who hath attain'd to such an excellent temper as this is, is certainly a real and true saint, and therefore shall as certainly partake of that transcendent happiness, which is here called *the inheritance of the saints in light*. It is called an *inheritance*, or, as the word signifies also, *a lot*, in allusion to that type of heaven, the land of *Canaan*, which was divided among all the children of *Israel* by lot; and is all along in the *old testament* called their inheritance. And so certainly is heaven, in a proper and literal sense, the inheritance of the saints: for they being all regenerate, and born again of God, are properly his children; and, as the apostle rightly argues, *if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 17. So that all the saints or sons of God, in whatsoever age or place they were born again, from the beginning to the end of the world, they are all co-heirs, and so have an equal right and title to this inheritance; not only to some part of it, but to the whole, and all and every one of them equally possess it all: it is not like an earthly inheritance, that is divided among the co-heirs, some taking one part of it, and some another; but every one, that hath any share in this heavenly inheritance, enjoys it all himself, as much as if he was the sole heir, and there was none else to partake of it but himself.

NEITHER are the saints joint-heirs only with one another, but as the apostle there speaks, with Christ himself; and, if so, their inheritance must needs be very large, for *Christ is appointed heir of all things*, Hebr. i. 2. And if they be joint-heirs with him, as be sure they are, every one of them must inherit all things too as he doth. And so be sure they do; for God himself asserts it, saying, *he that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son*, Rev. xxi. 7. where we may observe both the vast extent of this inheritance of the saints, and likewise the reason of it. As to its extent, it is not confined to a parish, or county, or kingdom upon earth; no, not to the whole earth, nor to the moon, nor sun, nor to any star, nor to all the stars of heaven, nor to the whole heavens where they are, nor yet to the greatest part of the creation, but extends itself to the whole: for they *inherit all things*; all things that are good or amiable, all things that are pleasing or delightful, all things that are necessary or convenient for them, all things they can desire or hope for, all things they can love or take comfort in, all things that can any way contribute to their happiness, as all things in the whole world shall do one way or other.

FOR, even while they are upon earth, all things work together for their good, how much more when they come to heaven? where they shall clearly see how all things that ever happened to them, through the whole course of their lives, concurred to bring them thither; and so will be matter of joy and comfort to them, when there: by which means they will then take pleasure, not only in all the devotions, alms, and good works they ever performed, but likewise in all the losses, crosses, and disappointments, pains, sicknesses, and troubles of all sorts, that ever befel them; yea, and in all things that God ever made, or did, or suffered to be done in the world: for all things are theirs, even while they are here below, as St. Paul assures the saints at *Corinth*, saying, *all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours*; 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. All things are settled upon them at their new birth, and when they come to full age, that is, as soon as they get to heaven, they will have the actual possession of all things, and then must needs enjoy whatsoever any thing in the world can afford them. And what is there in the world, but what affords the saints in heaven something to delight and please them? The heaven of heavens affords them most commodious and pleasant mansions. All the holy angels there afford them their most agreeable company and conversation; all the devils and damned in hell afford them matter of praise and thankfulness to God, that they are not there; all the glorious lights in the firmament afford them a most delicious prospect. In short, all the animals, and plants, and earths, and stones, and metals, and minerals, and whatsoever God ever made, either in heaven or earth, afford

afford them a clear and perfect view of his divine perfections ; which cannot but affect their hearts with the highest transports of joy and wonder.

THUS doth every saint in heaven inherit all things ; all things are his ; and it is no marvel, for God himself is his, as it follows in the place before quoted, *he shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. He shall be my son*, that's the reason he is an heir ; *I will be his God*, that's the reason that he inherits all things ; for he, who hath him that hath all things, cannot but have all things in him ; yea, infinitely more than all things else ; all things that God hath made being in a manner nothing in comparison of him that made them : who therefore, to compleat the happiness of his saints, doth not only give them all he hath, but even himself too, saying, *I will be their God*, or rather, as the words signify, *I will be God to them*. By virtue of which promise they enjoy not only whatsoever God hath made or done, but likewise whatsoever he is, even all those infinite, eternal, incomprehensible perfections, which are concentrated in him.

BUT here I must confess myself at a loss, not knowing how to conceive, much less to express either how the saints in heaven enjoy God, or how great an happiness that is to them ; only in general we know they see God face to face, as not only St. Paul, but likewise St. John acquaints us, saying, *beloved, now we are the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. 1 John iii. 2.

FROM whence it is evident, that they see God, not only as manifesting himself in his creatures, but as he is in himself. Which blessed sight must needs fill them with the highest joys their finite nature is able to bear ; to see wisdom, and power, and greatness, and goodness, and justice, and mercy, and immensity, and eternity ; to see the Lord of hosts, the chiefest, the only good ; to see God himself unveiling himself, and shining forth in all his glory before them ; yea, to see him smiling, as it were, upon them, rejoicing over them, demeaning himself as well pleased with them ! who is able to conceive how much their blessed souls are affected, delighted, transported with this blessed sight ? none certainly, but only they that have it. They know, yea, they feel it to be the greatest, the only perfect happiness they can possibly enjoy ; and that all things else could never satisfy their desires, and so make them happy, without this : whereas, this would do it without all things else ; it being impossible for them to desire any thing but what they have in God, infinite goodness itself. In whom, by consequence, all their inclinations meet as in their proper center ; and so their minds are always at rest and quiet, and their souls full as they can hold of solid and substantial joy ; which makes them break forth continually into praises and hallelujahs to almighty God, and to the lamb that sitteth upon the throne, who purchased such a glorious inheritance as this is for them, and settled it upon them for evermore.

BUT how can these things be ? how is it possible for the saints in heaven to see God ? to that the apostle answers in my text, by calling it the inheritance of the saints in light. It is true, all men are born at first spiritually blind, and so generally live in the dark, seeing no more of God, or any spiritual object, than as if there was no such thing in being. But when a man is born again, his eyes are opened, and he is *turned from darkness to light*, Acts xxvi. 18. as well as from the power of Satan unto God. And therefore all such are called *the children of light*, and *the children of the day*, 1 Thess. v. 5. because they have a *marvellous light* (as St. Peter calls it) constantly shining in them, 1 Pet. ii. 9. whereby they discover many glorious things, which lie perfectly hid to all other mortals. By this *Elisha's* servant, when his eyes were opened, *saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire*, 2 Kings vi. 17. even a whole legion of the heavenly host round about his master. By this *St. Stephen* *saw the heavens opened, and Christ standing at the right-hand of God* ; Acts vii. 55, 56. yea, by this *Moses* *saw him that is invisible*, Heb. xi. 27. God himself. And thus all that are real saints, being the children of light, see more or less of God ; at least, so much as to make them love, and desire, and fear, and trust on him above all things in the world. Indeed they cannot see his face and live, as he himself told *Moses* ; but they see him as *Moses* did, *Exod. xxxiii. 20.* in his back parts, in his works, the effects and products of his divine perfections. And the reason why they cannot see his face, and live in this world, is, because they are still in their imperfect state, and therefore cannot possibly have a perfect sight of so glorious a being ; or if they had, it would strike them dead, for they could not possibly bear it ; or, as *Job* expresseth it, *by reason of his highness they could not endure*,

Job

Job xxxi. 23. so as to live under it. But seeing God himself said, that no man shall see his face and live, he thereby gives us to understand, that some shall see his face when they are dead, and departed out of this life.

AND so questionless do all the saints that are in heaven ; for they live in a city *which hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the lamb in the midst thereof ;* Rev. xxi. 23. or as the prophet *Isaiah* words it, *the Lord is to them an everlasting light,* Isa. lx. 19. So that as the sun is to us upon earth the fountain of all that light whereby we see any object here below, so to the saints that are above in heaven God himself is pleased to issue forth light immediately from himself, which exceeds the light of the sun infinitely more than that exceeds the glimmering of a glow-worm. Neither doth it only shine as the sun doth, upon them, but into them, and so enlightens themselves too, as well as all things that are about them. And what is there in the world which they cannot see by such a glorious, such an infinite light as this is ? By this light they see not only the superficies, but the very substance and contexture of every creature they have a mind to look upon, as exactly as if it was perfectly anatomized and laid open before them : by this they see the several virtues, qualities and operations of things here below, and the great ends and purposes for which they are designed : by this they see the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, and other great phenomenas of nature, which so much puzzle philosophy, and make it but a mere conjecture : by this they see the secret and wonderful power that God hath put into all animals, and vegetables, of propagating their respective species, so that none of them ever did, or can ever fail to be in the world : by this they see both the composition and the several motions of the sun, and all the other planets, as well as fixed stars, and what influences they have upon terrestrial bodies : by this they see the wise establishment of second causes, how they depend upon one another, and all upon the first. The sight of which, and such like things, must needs be an extraordinary pleasure to them, by reason of the most admirable art and contrivance they observe in them ; and also because their faculties are by this means employed to the proper uses for which they were made, and to which they therefore tend : for as God made all things for the manifestation of his own glory, he endued men with reason, on purpose that they might behold and admire the glory of those perfections which he manifested in them. And hence it is, that (all things naturally tending to their end) all men naturally desire to know, and many apply their minds wholly to find out such things as those are ; and if they can but guess at any of them with the least shew of reason, or so much as probability, they are mightily pleased with it. But what a pleasure then must it be to have a full view and prospect of them, and of that infinite wisdom, power, and goodness which appeareth in them ; as the saints in heaven have by that light which shines upon their inheritance.

MOREOVER, by this light they look back upon their former lives, and see the steady hand of providence ordering and over-ruling, not only the greater occurrences, but even the least circumstances in them, and the holy spirit of God making some use or other of every one of them, to work them over to himself. By this they see God's infinite love and goodness to his church militant here on earth, in all the straits and difficulties he brings it into ; and how good and necessary it is for it, that every thing should be just as it is.

By this they see the holy angels and all their fellow-citizens in the new *Hierusalem*, and converse familiarly with them, as we do with one another : by this they see their ever-blessed saviour, the eternal son of God, in his nature, exalted at the right-hand of the Father, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named in heaven or earth : by this they see all the glory which the Father hath given him, as he himself once prayed they might, *John* xvii. 24. Yea, by this they see the most high God face to face, even as we see the sun by his own light ; and that too, as clearly, as fully, as perfectly, as it is possible for creatures to do it : which so refreshes, enlivens, elevates, and cheers their spirits, that they are always rejoicing, and singing, and praising God ; admiring, adoring, magnifying, and giving thanks to his almighty, all-glorious, and all-gracious majesty, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for his creating, redeeming, and sanctifying them, so as to bring them through the various changes and chances of this mortal life, to such an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ; eternal in the heaven, in glory, in bliss, in light itself.

AND now we are got upon the mount, how well may we say with the apostles, *it is good for us to be here*, Matt. xvii. 4. Let us set up our tents, and dwell continually upon the contemplation of this glorious inheritance of the saints in light: but alas! how far as yet are we distant from it? how unworthy of it? how unmeet for it? what a deal of work have we to do before we can get thither? but blessed be God, we are in the ready way, living in such a church wherein we have all things that can be desired in order to it: let us not then despair, but use the utmost of our care, and study to qualify ourselves aright for it, and we cannot miss of it.

III. FOR which purpose therefore let us consider in the next place, how we may be rightly qualified, or as the apostle here speaks, *made meet* to be partakers of this inheritance of the saints in light.

WHERE we may observe by the way, that the apostle here supposeth, or rather takes it for granted, that all men are not meet for it. Than which nothing can be more certain, none being meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints, but only they who are saints themselves; God himself hath excluded all others from it, by his eternal and irrevocable decree, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Hebr. xii. 14. And indeed none but saints are subjects capable of it; for all others being still in their natural and sinful estate, their minds are so stuffed with vicious and gross humours, that they cannot see the light; and so wholly inclined and bent upon sensual objects, that they can take no pleasure in the joys of heaven: but rather, being altogether unclean and carnal, they have an utter aversion, if not an antipathy, against such pure and spiritual delights, as being directly contrary to their corrupt nature: insomuch, that heaven itself would seem more like hell than heaven to them; the place would seem melancholy, the company irksome, the light troublesome, every thing uneasy and disagreeable.

As suppose it should please almighty God to take us all up immediately from this place into the highest heavens, and there set us all just at our saviour's elbow; all such who are real saints among us, who love God above all things, how glad would they be to see him they love, to see their saviour shining in all his glory? how suddenly would they strike up with the choir of heaven, in singing forth the praises of him that brought them thither? what infinite pleasure would they take in the place, the work, the company, and every thing they see there? but as for others who are still in their sins, and mind only earthly things, how sad and disconsolate would they be? they would wonder to see the saints so pleasant and joyful, for, as for their parts, they can see nothing there which they care for; in the midst of light they would be still in darkness; in sorrow in the midst of joys: they cannot bear that heavenly musick; or if they did, it would sound harsh, all discord to them; they cannot taste of those spiritual dainties; or if they did, they could not relish, nor find any sweetness in them; they cannot see the face of God; or if they did, they would not be pleased, but terrified and confounded at it, and wish with all their souls to be out of that sad place again, that they might mind the business, and enjoy the pleasures they like better. If that be heaven, they never desire to come there any more; and all because they want that principle of true grace and holiness, which should make them saints, and so capacitate them for the enjoyment of those holy pleasures, without which a blind man may as well delight in pictures, the deaf in musick, yea, a brute beast in metaphysics, as they in heaven, or in God himself.

BY this therefore we may see how necessary it is to be holy, before we can be happy; pure in heart, before we can see God; real and true saints, before we can partake of their inheritance in light; and, by consequence, as ever we desire to go to heaven when we die, we must take care, while we live, to get our hearts purged from all corrupt affections, our minds enlightened, and our souls sanctified throughout, and inclined wholly unto God, so as to prefer him at least in some degree before all things else; that so we may go out of this world rightly disposed and fitted to behold the light of his countenance, and to solace ourselves in it, as the highest object of our soul's desires. And then we may be sure that our desires shall be fully satisfied; for our souls will be no sooner loosen'd from our bodies, but they will be immediately carried up to heaven, and there partake of the inheritance of the saints in light; and at the last day our bodies shall be united to our souls again, and then both in soul and body we shall enjoy all we can desire for evermore.

BUT who is sufficient for these things? how can we who were born, and have lived so long in sin, ever be made so pure and holy, as to be meet to live with saints and angels, with Christ and God himself in the world to come? it is, I confess, no easy matter; but howsoever it is possible for every one here present to be so; nay, more than that, none of us can fail of it, unless we be failing to ourselves in our endeavours after it: as we may easily perceive, if we do but consider how others have been, and so how we ourselves may be sanctified or made saints, if we do but set ourselves in good earnest about it.

IV. FOR which end we may observe, that this being too great a work for us to do by our own strength, the eternal son of God himself was pleased to undertake it for us. And for that purpose, having taken our nature upon him, he gave himself for us, as to redeem us from all iniquity, *so to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. iii. 14. And so he is made to us wisdom as well as righteousness, sanctification as well as redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. That as we are justified and redeemed from our sins, so we may be made wise and holy thro' him, who is the fountain, as of all the good things we do or can enjoy, so likewise of all the goodness and virtue we are or can be endued with. It all flows from him; who therefore tells us, that *without him we can do nothing*, John xv. 5. but by him there is nothing but we can do; as St. Paul found by experience, saying, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13.

HENCE, therefore, if we desire to be made holy, we must apply ourselves to Christ, who, altho' he be now in heaven as to his human nature, yet he is always present with us here below, both in his divine person, and also by his holy spirit; and so is ready upon all occasions to assist us in our endeavours after piety, and to crown them with that success, as to make us sincerely pious. For which purpose, as he sanctified our human nature in general by assuming it into his divine person, so he sanctifieth our human persons in particular, by making us partakers of his divine nature; which he doth by sending his holy spirit, of the same divine nature with himself, into our hearts, which by degrees makes us also holy and spiritual, and so in our capacities like unto himself, and partakers of his own nature.

NOW the great thing which he requires of us, in order to his doing this great work for us, is, that we believe in him; for he himself saith, that we are *sanctified by faith that is in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. Not by believing only his gospel in general to be true, but by believing particularly in himself, so as to have a sure trust and confidence on him, to give us such illuminations and assistances of his holy spirit, whereby we may be turn'd from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and so be made sincerely, as he is infinitely pure and holy. And indeed, this is the first and great thing we ought to believe and trust in our saviour for, and that which is the foundation of all our other expectations from him: for we have no ground to expect either pardon, or any other blessing at his hands, untill we repent, and be converted. But if we firmly believe and depend upon him, in the first place, for grace to repent and turn to God, and so become holy and new creatures, according to the promises he hath made us to that purpose; as he will then most certainly perform such promises to us, so all the other blessings, that he hath purchased for us, will then follow in course: for if we be truly sanctified and made holy, then our sins will be all pardoned, our persons justified, our duties accepted, God reconciled to us, and at length our souls eternally saved: but all these things depend upon our being first sanctified by him, as that doth upon our believing in him.

BUT faith, as the apostle saith, *is the gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. And therefore, if we desire to believe, so as to be sanctified, we must ask and expect it from him, in the use of those means which he hath appointed, both for the begetting and increasing of it; we must read, and hear, and meditate upon his holy word; we must fast and pray, and receive the sacrament of our Lord's supper; for these are the ordinary means which God hath established in his church, whereby to make known himself unto us, to convince us of the truth and certainty of his promises, and so work and confirm in us a true belief of them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which for that purpose doth continually assist and influence the administration and performance of such duties; which therefore are not only holy duties in themselves, but the means too, whereby we may become holy.

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BUT for that purpose we may perform not only one or more, but all of them, so as to go through the whole course that God hath prescribed for the healing of our spiritual distempers, and for the restoring us to a sound frame and constitution of mind, wherein, as I have shewn, the nature of true holiness properly consists.

AND that we must do too, not only now and then, but thro' the whole course of our lives, so as to be constantly, as much as possibly we can, employed in some or other of these holy exercises; not in a careless and superficial manner, but heartily, sincerely, earnestly, as for our lives; for our lives, our eternal lives, in a great measure depend upon it: for it is by our continual exercise of those holy duties, and the grace of God always accompanying of them, that our hearts are insensibly taken off from sin and the world, and raised up higher and higher towards God and heaven, till, at length, our whole soul being sanctified by a quick and lively faith in Christ, we are *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*.

AND what cause have they, who are so, to give thanks, as St. Paul here doth, to God the Father for it? for the whole of our salvation, from first to last, must be ascribed unto him: it is begun, continued, and ended all in him; for it was he *who so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. It was he *who spared not his son, but delivered him up*, Rom. viii. 32. to be tempted, to be scourged, to be spit upon; to be arraigned, condemned, crucified, and all for us and our salvation. It was he, *who having raised up this his son Jesus, sent him to bless us, by turning every one of us from his iniquities*; Acts iii. 26. *and made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*; 2 Cor. v. 21. It was he *who hath exalted him with his own right-hand, to be both a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance and remission of sins*, Acts v. 31. It is he who hath passed by the greatest part of mankind, and hath revealed himself and his son to us, the unworthiest of all his creatures: it was he who caused us to be born and bred within the pale of his holy catholic church, and in one of the soundest and purest parts of it upon the face of the whole earth: it is he who still continues the means of grace to us, and us to them, and his blessing both to them and us: it is he who gives us his holy spirit, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and to quicken us with newness of life; to raise up our minds from the world, and fix them upon himself; to keep us from evil, and to enable us to do or suffer any thing we can for his sake: it is he who calls upon us continually, by the ministry of his word, to repent and believe the gospel, and gives us grace to do it. In a word, it is he who hath sent me, the unworthiest of all his ministers, at this time, to acquaint you in his name, how ye may be *made meet partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*; and it is he alone can make you so.

AND therefore all, who are so made, may well join with the choir of heaven, in those seraphick anthems we find them singing in the revelation; *Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb. Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.* Rev. vii. 10, 12.

S E R M O N III.

Preached before the House of PEERS, in the Abbey-church
of Westminster, on Sunday November the 5th, 1704.

ESTHER ix. 27, 28.

The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their appointed time, every year :

And that these days should be remember'd and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city ; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the remembrance of them perish from their seed.

AS God made all things at first, so he still doth all things for himself, for his own honour and glory. And therefore he hath made several creatures, as the angels in heaven ; and upon earth men, capable of reflecting upon what he doth, and of discerning, acknowledging and admiring those infinite perfections which he sheweth forth in doing it, and so of giving him the praise and honour that is due unto him for it : which therefore he requireth all men to do. And for that purpose, it hath been usual in all ages to appoint some certain times and seasons wherein to do it, not only privately, every one by himself, but publickly, and in a body, many meeting and joining together, for no other end, but to own and celebrate the wonderful works that God hath done, and to testify and declare the same by all such outward acts by which we are said to worship him.

As we do this day : upon which therefore it may be proper to consider, first, in general, what grounds we have to believe that it is agreeable to the will of God, and, by consequence acceptable to him, that some days be set apart, whereon to recognize and keep up the memory of his works, such especially, as seem greater than ordinary ; and then to apply it particularly to that which gave occasion to our present meeting, from the words which I have now read,

FOR which purpose we may first observe, that God, if he had pleased, could have put all things into the course and order they are now in, at the same moment, wherein he produced them altogether out of nothing, by his word. But he was pleased to make it the work of six days, and to tell us what he did particularly upon each of those days, that we might be better able to apprehend and celebrate his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness in the whole, and in every part of it. And having finished this great work, and settled the whole chain of subordinate causes, which he designed to make use of for the bringing about ordinary effects, in six days, and then resting or ceasing to do any more such works on the seventh, he blessed and sanctified that day, that men in all ages might set apart every seventh day from all other business, to contemplate upon what he did in six, and to adore

and laud him for it. And when he was pleased afterwards to act without, or beyond the order of things which he at first established, he still required that the time, wherein he did so, should be religiously observed every year, in memory of what he then did.

As when, by many signs and wonders, he had brought the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, upon the fourteenth day of the first month, he commanded them to keep that day every year throughout their generations, by an ordinance for ever, *Exod. xii. 14, 17.* and gave them several rules and laws for the better observation of it, that they might never forget the power and goodness which he shewed them upon that extraordinary occasion, but should praise and magnify his name for it every year, as long as they should continue to be his people: for which reason also he called this feast the passover, to put them in mind of his extraordinary favour, in passing over their houses when he destroyed the *Egyptians*.

AND having by the ministry of angels proclaimed his law upon mount *Sinai*, in a miraculous manner, seven weeks, or forty-nine days after the first passover, when the harvest began in the land of *Canaan*, whither he was leading his people; he ordained the feast of weeks, called the Pentecost, as being the fiftieth day from the passover, to be strictly observed every year, that they might always remember the great things he had then done for them.

AND seeing he led them, and fed them with miracles forty years together in the wilderness, where they lived all the while in booths or tabernacles, he commanded them to leave their houses, and to dwell in tabernacles seven days every year, from the fifteenth day of the seventh month, which is therefore called the feast of tabernacles: the reason of which institution he himself is pleased to give in these words, *ye shall dwell in booths seven days, all that are Israelites shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know, that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, Levit. xxiii. 42, 43.*

THESE are the three great yearly feasts instituted by God himself, at which all the males among his people were commanded to appear before him, in the place which he should chuse; and none were to appear before him empty, but every one was to bring, according to his ability, something as an acknowledgment of God's special grace and favour, vouchsafed upon that occasion, *Deut. xvi. 16, 17. Exod. xxiii. 14, 15, 17.*

To these he added the first day of every month, called the new moon, and especially the first day of *Tisri*, the first month of their civil (though the seventh of their sacred) year, called the *feast of trumpets*; on which days he commanded more than ordinary sacrifices to be offered, as a memorial of his goodness to them, in preserving them in the month or year that was past, and to implore the same favour in that which was to come, *Numb. xxviii. 11. chap. xxix. 1. Levit. xxiii. 24.* So great care did he take, that his people might always remember what he did for them, and thank him for it, as the great end for which he did it.

BUT the most high God, knowing how prone his people would be to transgress these and all his other laws, he enjoined them also one yearly fast, on the tenth day of the seventh month, about our *September*, called the day of expiation; on which they were not only to abstain from all manner of food, but likewise to afflict their souls; that is, to humble themselves, by repentance and mortification, for all the sins they had committed against him, *Lev. xvi. 29. chap. xxiii. 27.* This is the fast spoken of in the *Acts of the apostles*, where it is said, that *sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now past; Acts xxvii. 9.*

NOW it having pleased almighty God himself thus to ordain several feasts, and a fast, to be observed every year, for the purposes before mentioned, his church and people in all ages have from thence concluded, as they well might, that it is his divine will and pleasure, that when he sheweth them any extraordinary favour, the day on which he did it should be yearly observed, to keep up the memory of it, and to render him the thanks and praise which is due unto him, as the author and giver of it: and when he lays any publick and extraordinary judgment upon them for their sins, the day, on which it was executed, should be every year devoted to fasting and prayer, to shew their repentance for the sins whereby they had incurred his displeasure in such an extraordinary manner, and to supplicate his divine majesty never to inflict any more such punishments upon them.

AND accordingly we read of four anniversary fasts observed in the prophet *Zachariah's* time, the fast of the fourth, the fifth, the seventh, and the tenth months,

Zach.

Zach. viii. 19. The fast of the tenth month, or *Tebeth*, was kept every year upon the tenth day of the month, about our *December*, because the city of *Hierusalem* began that day to be besieged by *Nebuchadnezzar*, *2 Kings xxv. 1.* *Jer. lii. 4.* The fast of the fourth month, about our *June*, on the 17th day, because the city was then broken up, and the daily sacrifice ceased, the law was burnt, and an idol set up in the temple, *Jer. xxxix. 2.* chap. *lii. 6, 7.* The fast of the fifth month, the tenth day, because the temple was that day burnt, *Jer. lii. 12.* The fast of the seventh month, the third day, because *Gedaliah* was that day treacherously slain by *Ishmael* and his confederates; upon which there fell so many and great troubles upon them, that they have celebrated the memory of it ever since, *2 Kings xxv. 22.* *Jer. xli. 1.* For all these four fasts, though they were not of divine, but only of human institution, yet there being just cause for their being instituted, were allowed of by the prophets, and religiously observed by the people for many ages, even to this day; for we find all these anniversary feasts and fasts, still kept up in their kalendar, with many other, too many to be now insisted on.

BESIDES these yearly fasts there were two weekly, *Monday* and *Thursday*; which they pretend were instituted by *Ezra*; *Thursday*, in memory of *Moses's* going up the second time to the mount upon that day of the week, and the other in memory of his coming down again upon a *Monday* forty days after. These are the fasts mentioned, *Luke xviii. 12.*

THESE were all the publick fasts observed generally by all sorts of people under the law: besides which there were many other commonly observed among them, at least by particular sects; as appears from that question propounded to our saviour, *why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees, but thine eat and drink?* *Luke v. 33.* To which our saviour's answer is very remarkable; *can ye, saith he, make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast in those days,* ver. 34, 35. as if he had said, so long as I am here with my disciples, they have no cause to fast or mourn, but rather to rejoice and praise God for my presence with them, But the days will come, when I shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast in those days. There shall then be days of fasting appointed in my church, as there have been hitherto in that of the *Jews*, especially those days wherein I shall be taken from them.

AND then he farther explains his meaning by a parable, how *no man putteth a piece of an old garment to a new; the old not agreeing with the new: nor is new wine to be put into old bottles, but new; that both may be preserved;* *Luke v. 36, 37, 38.* whereby he shews, that the old fasts, which the *Jews* had hitherto received, would not suit with his new religion; but that there should be new days and occasions of fasting now appointed, suitable to his institutions; that so both the duty of fasting and his religion may be kept up: which could not be by those fasts which had been hitherto observed. And then he adds, *no man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith the old is better:* ver. 39. as if he had said, my disciples, having been used to the old fasts, would not presently like any other, but would prefer the old before them; but when my religion shall be established in the world, they will then see occasion to ordain and observe other fasts, agreeable to the same; and then shall they fast in those days.

NOW, from these things thus briefly premised, we may see what firm ground there is in the word of God, for setting apart some certain days every year, for days of feasting or fasting; especially such as are appointed by our church, which are all exactly accommodated to the religion which Christ hath revealed to the world, and have been all along observed by his catholick church, militant here on earth, almost ever since he was taken from it: except three only which are peculiar to our church and nation, the thirtieth of *January*, the twenty-ninth of *May*, and that which we now celebrate; all settled by act of parliament, as the others are. And to justify the wisdom of our nation, in setting apart these days, for the holy purposes designed by them, it is much to be observed, that there are precedents for them all in the scripture itself.

AS for the first, it is written, that when that pious and virtuous prince *Josiah*, king of *Judah*, was slain in an engagement with *Pharaoh Necho*, king of *Egypt*, all *Judah* and *Hierusalem* mourned for *Josiah*: and *Jeremiah* lamented for *Josiah*; and all the singing-men and singing-women spake of *Josiah* in their lamentations to this day; *2 Chron. xxxv. 24, 25.* To this day, that is, to the time that this book of *Chronicles* was written;

written ; which is generally believed to be done by *Ezra*, who lived about one hundred and fifty years after *Josiah's* death. So that his death was commemorated and lamented at least all that time ; and that too by a law made for that purpose : for it follows in the text, *and they made them an ordinance in Israel ; and behold they are written in the lamentations*, ver. 25. They, who had the legislative power then in their hands, made, it seems, an *ordinance* ; or, as the word is usually translated, a *statute* or *law* for it : a law so agreeable to the will of God, that it was approved of by his prophet *Jeremiah* ; who himself also, for the better observation of it, seems to have drawn up his book of lamentations, for a service, as it were, to be said or sung upon that mournful occasion.

HERE then we have a precedent of divine authority, for making a law to commemorate the death of such an excellent prince as *Josiah* was. And such was king *Charles I.* a king as like *Josiah* in his zeal for God, and in all manner of virtue and good-works, as any that ever swayed the scepter of this or any other kingdom. And as his life was like *Josiah's*, his death was much more to be lamented : for *Josiah* died by the hand of a foreign enemy in the heat of battle : King *Charles* was murdered by his own subjects, in such a manner, that the whole nation had but too much cause to make a law, that the day on which it was done should be every year observed, throughout the kingdom, as a day of fasting and humiliation.

AND there is, doubtless, as much reason for the keeping, as there was for the making this law : this being the most proper means whereby to avert, if it be possible, the judgments which otherwise may still be justly inflicted upon the nation for it ; and to put us always in mind to take care of those seditious principles, which lead to such execrable practices ; and also that our most gracious sovereign, whom God preserve, and her successors in all ages, may sit easy on the throne, not fearing that any such wicked attempts will be ever any more made upon their sacred persons, seeing their subjects every year in such a solemn manner, before God himself, express their utter detestation of, and their humiliation for what was then done.

As we have the foresaid precedent in the *Jewish* church, for keeping the thirtieth day of *January* as a day of fasting, for the murder of King *Charles I.* we have another for our celebrating the twenty-ninth of *May*, in memory of the restoration of King *Charles II.* For when *Judas Maccabeus* had repaired the sanctuary and altar at *Hierusalem*, which had been for some years desolate and profaned, and so had restored the religion established by God in that nation, and in some measure the civil government too ; and having begun upon the twenty-fifth day of their month *Casfeu* to offer sacrifices, according to the law, upon the new altar of burnt-offerings ; he, with his brethren and the whole congregation of *Israel*, ordained, that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year, for the space of eight days, from the said twenty-fifth of *Casfeu*, about our *November* ; 1 *Maccab.* iv. 36, 52, 59. 2 *Maccab.* x. 5, 6, 8. which feast is therefore called *Encœnia*, the feast of dedication, or, as the word properly signifies, the feast of restoration ; because their new altar was then dedicated, and so their ancient religion restored. And that this feast was kept in our saviour's time, appears, in that he himself was at *Hierusalem* at that as well as at their other feasts ; for it is written, *and it was at Hierusalem, the feast of the dedication, and it was winter : and Jesus walked in the temple*, John x. 22, 23. And though this feast was ordained in a time when there was no prophet in *Israel*, and therefore could not be of divine institution ; yet nevertheless, as our saviour himself signified his approbation of it, by his being present at it, and hath caused that also to be recorded, that his church in all ages might take notice of it, so it is as constantly observed by the *Jews* to this day, as any that were instituted by God himself.

AND whosoever impartially considers all the circumstances of it, will see, that our king, lords, and commons had the same reason to enjoin the twenty-ninth of *May* to be kept every year as a day of thanksgiving, as *Judas* and his brethren had for their day of restoration ; and that it always ought to be observed, as well as theirs, as being the day on which God was pleased, of his especial grace and favour, to bring home our then dread sovereign, King *Charles II.* thereby restoring to us the publick and free profession of his true religion and worship, to the great comfort and joy of our hearts ; as it is expressed in the service for the day.

AND

AND so we come to the day we now celebrate, in memory of God's deliverance of this church and kingdom from the papist's conspiracy, intended to be executed upon this day, the fifth of *November*. Which was such a conspiracy, and such a deliverance, that the like is scarce to be met with in any history, sacred or profane, except in this book of *Esther*; where we have also a clear precedent for making a law for the publick and solemn commemoration of such a deliverance every year, in these words: *the Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their appointed time every year: and that these days should be remember'd and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the remembrance of them perish from their seed.*

FOR here we find an ordinance or law made for a festival or day of thanksgiving, to be observed by all *Jews*, every year, throughout all ages, called the feast of *Purim*. The occasion in short was this; *Haman*, being highly preferred by king *Ahasuerus*, was so incensed against *Mordecai* the *Jew*, for not bowing to him as other people did, that for his sake he designed to destroy all the *Jews* that were in all the empire, reaching from *India* to *Ethiopia*; and for that purpose he cast a sort of lot, called *Pur*, according to the superstitious conceits of those times, to find out which was the most lucky day in all the year, whereon to bring about his design: and the lot falling at last upon the thirteenth day of *Adar*, the last month in the *Jewish* year, he procured the king's decree, that all the *Jews* in his dominions, consisting of 127 provinces, should be destroyed on that day.

BUT, before that day came, God had so ordered it, that the king's mind was altered, *Haman* disgraced and hanged, *Mordecai* advanced, the former decree revoked, and another granted, that the *Jews* might defend themselves, and with the assistance of the magistrates and officers, in every province, destroy all that were ready to destroy them; which they accordingly began to do upon the foresaid thirteenth day of *Adar*, the day on which they were to have been destroyed. And their deliverance being perfected, in some places on the fourteenth, in others on the fifteenth day of the said month, they agreed among themselves, and ordained, that those two days should be kept every year, as days of feasting and gladness, and called *Purim*, from *Pur*, the lot before spoken of; which being established by *Mordecai*, *Esth.* ix. 20, 21. and confirmed by Queen *Esther*, chap. v. 29, 32. this feast hath been accordingly observed ever since, and is to this day, by all *Jews*, wheresoever they live in any part of the earth.

AND it may not be impertinent to observe, that although this feast also was established only by human authority, yet it was so well approved of by God, that the history of it is, by his inspiration, made part of the canonical scriptures, that all generations might be certified of the great deliverance which he then wrought for his people; and that the foresaid feast was instituted on purpose to perpetuate the memory of it.

AND certainly we have as much reason to keep the fifth of *November*, as they had for their feast of *Purim*, our deliverance from the papists being every way as remarkable as theirs from *Haman's* conspiracy; and in many respects as like it, as if it had been copied from it; but so, that in some things the copy exceeded the original.

HAMAN was a long while contriving which day of the year was best for accomplishing his design; so were the papists, 'till at length they thought, as he did, that they had found out a lucky day; a day whereon the king and the whole three states of the realm were to meet together in one room; for then it was only putting good store of gunpowder under that room, and blowing it up while they were in it, and the work would be done, not only in one day as *Haman's*, but in one moment of that day.

AND as *Haman's* design was not to destroy some particular persons only, but the whole body of the *Jews*, dispersed all over that vast empire, without any distinction of age, or sex, or quality, not excepting the queen herself, *Esth.* iii. 31. chap. iv. 13. so here, the king, the queen, the prince, the nobility and gentry, even the whole body of the nation assembled in parliament, were designed to be cut off at one blow. What a dreadful blow would that have been to this nation, if it had been given? many of the nobility and gentry, which are now so serviceable to their sovereign and their country, could never have been so; for they would never have

been born ; yea, it is much to be feared, that *England* would never have been blessed with such a sovereign as we now have : for tho' her royal grandfather, of ever-blessed memory, was then too young to be present at that parliament, yet it can scarce be doubted but that he also, some way or other, would have been taken off, and martyred before this time.

BUT there is one thing wherein this so far exceeded *Haman's* conspiracy, that there is no comparison between them for wickedness and cruelty ; for his was open and bare-faced, divulged and known all over the empire long before it was to be executed ; whereby the *Jews* had time to make what interest they could to prevent it, or to provide for their defence or escape, or at least to prepare themselves for death : whereas this was carried on so clandestinely, that it was not to be known 'till executed. But while the king was making his speech, and the lords and commons, in the integrity of their hearts, were thinking of nothing but what he said, on a sudden, in the twinkling of an eye, I dread to speak it, they were all to be sent together into the other world : the thoughts whereof fill me with such horror and confusion, that I dare say no more of it, but haste to take a short view of the grounds upon which these two plots were laid.

THE first occasion of *Haman's* was, because *Mordecai* the *Jew*, who was related to the queen, would not bow to him ; if he would have done that, he and his people might have been safe from danger. And if the crown of *England* would have bowed to the court of *Rome*, and the nobility and gentry would have submitted their necks again to that heavy yoke, this conspiracy had never been thought of : but they being now grown too wise for that, it was thought necessary, if possible, to cut them off to make way for others, that would be more pliant and submissive.

BUT the great reason alledged for the destruction of the *Jews*, and that upon which the decree for it was grounded, was, because *their laws were diverse from all people*, as *Haman* told the king, chap. iii. 8, 9. And he was so far in the right, that the *Jews* were governed by laws diverse from all other people ; but they were such laws which all other people ought to have been governed by ; laws made by the supreme governour of the world : in the observation whereof consisted all that could be truly called religion. So that the *Jewish* was the only true religion at that time professed upon earth ; and that made *Haman* have such a spight against the *Jews*, and the Devil to put it into his head to destroy them, if it had been possible, from off the face of the earth, that the whole earth might be overspread with idolatry and superstition.

How far this holds good as to our present case, is so well known, that I need only observe in general, that this nation having lived many years in communion with *Rome*, and thereby contracted all the errors and superstitions, wherewith the christian religion was there corrupted and made different from what Christ and his apostles had settled in the world ; it pleased God, at length, to open the eyes of the government to see an absolute necessity of laying aside all such corruptions in faith and practice, as ever they desired that the christian, the only true religion now upon the face of the earth, should be again truly professed in it : which was therefore done so effectually, that the christian religion was here restored to its primitive simplicity and purity, both in doctrine, discipline, and worship.

THIS is that which made those, who still continued in subjection to the see of *Rome*, so very restless and uneasy, that they could never bear the sight of this church, but have been ever since plotting and conspiring against it, more than against any that were reformed about the same time ; till, at length, they arrived at the highest pitch that all the power of hell could carry them, the conspiracy which we this day commemorate.

INDEED this church was too well reformed, not to be assaulted on every side. When our saviour said, that *the gates of hell should not prevail against his church*, Matt. xvi. 18. he plainly intimated and foretold, that the gates of hell would use all the power and policy they had to disturb, undermine, and overthrow his church, that which was planted and ordered by himself. But then he promised withal, that they should not prevail against it.

THIS day was this scripture fulfilled in the sight of this nation, as to the church which God had planted and established in it : though he suffered it to be brought to the brink of ruin, he would not suffer it to be thrown down ; but, as he

he had done it many a time before, he preserved it now, though it was at the expence of little less than a miracle, if not at the full value.

THAT there was more than ordinary in it, is acknowledged and declared in the act itself that was made for the observation of this day, where it is said, that this conspiracy would have turned to the utter ruin of this whole kingdom, had it not pleased almighty God, by inspiring the king's most excellent majesty with a divine spirit, to interpret some dark phrases of a letter shew'd to his majesty, above and beyond all ordinary construction, whereby he miraculously discovered this hidden treason, not many hours before the appointed time for the execution thereof.

HERE then we may justly stand still and wonder at the infinite goodness and truth which God then manifested, in defending his church and people, and turning that, which was intended for a day of slaughter and destruction, into a joyful day of deliverance; and that too, not only then, but at another time also, above fourscore years after, when he brought over his late majesty upon the same day, to deliver us again from the same sort of enemies. They who do not see the hand of God in all this, it is because they will not: they, who do, cannot but highly esteem that church which almighty God hath so mercifully delivered from such imminent and apparent dangers, and give him the honour and praise which is due unto his holy name for it; as we do this day, and have cause to do so all the days of our life.

WHEN *Haman's* conspiracy was defeated, and the destruction design'd against the *Jews* was, by a wonderful chain of providences, turned upon their enemies, it is said, that many of the people of the land became *Jews*, for the fear of the *Jews* fell upon them, *Esth.* viii. 17. Their enemies, though heathens, saw plainly from what had happened, that the *Jews* had more than ordinary favour shewed them from heaven, and from thence inferred, that their laws and religion must needs be more acceptable there than any other; and therefore left their own for theirs, and became *Jews* themselves, that they might partake of the same privileges and favours with them.

GOD grant that this wonderful deliverance, which he wrought for our church and nation, may have the same effect upon our enemies on all sides, that they would all turn to us; it would then be an happy deliverance for them; as it was for us, who enjoy the benefit of it to this day, not only in our freedom from that tyranny and oppression, which we must otherwise have lived under, (if we had lived at all) but likewise in the true and free possession of the gospel, to the saving of our souls: which we could not have enjoyed as we do now, if we had not been delivered from this horrid plot, which was laid on purpose to deprive the whole nation of it.

BUT thanks be to God who hath delivered us, and in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us. But, that he may be graciously pleased to do so, we must take care to answer his holy end in what he hath done already for us, by living as becometh the gospel, which we so freely and truly profess in the church, which he for that purpose so wonderfully preserved: for that is the end wherefore he so preserved it, as it is of all the glorious victories and successes which he hath given our most gracious sovereign and her kingdoms, since her happy accession to the throne. The great end of all is, that we may glorify him; not only, as we do this day, with our mouths, and I hope with our hearts too, but likewise through the whole course of our lives; by giving up ourselves to his service, and striving all we can to shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, and hath still continued us in it, notwithstanding all the artifices that have been used by the Devil or man to get us out.

WHEREFORE, as a minister of Christ, and steward of the mysteries of God, I beseech you all, in his name, that you would keep the wonderful works that he hath done always in remembrance; particularly that of this day: that ye would ascribe it wholly to his infinite goodness and mercy in Jesus Christ, our only mediator and advocate: that ye would fix it so firmly upon your minds, that you may never forget to love and honour him above all; who is above all, and hath done, and can do such great things for you when he pleaseth: that ye would learn by it to fear the Lord and your sovereign, and not keep company with them who are given to change: and that ye would improve it to the great ends and purposes for which God did it, even that ye may worship and serve him better while ye are in this world, and attain everlasting joy and felicity in the next. Which now, by his assistance, ye all may, if ye will; for do but believe and live in all respects

respects as ye are taught by the church of *England*, and my life, my eternal life for yours, you will be happy for ever.

Which God grant we may all be, through Christ our saviour and mighty deliverer; to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, praise, and glory, this day, and for evermore.

S E R M O N IV.

Preached before the House of PEERS, in the Abbey-church of *Westminster*, on *January* the 30th, 1705-6.

ACTS xxii. 20.

And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting to his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

THE opposition which the christian religion met with, when it was first planted upon earth, was so far from hindring its taking root, as was designed, that it made it grow more, and spread wider, than otherwise it would have done: for the apostles and first disciples of Christ, being forced to flee from their native country, carried the gospel along with them, and preached it wheresoever they came, with undaunted courage and resolution; with that invincible patience and constancy, that their very enemies could not but admire it, and acknowledge, that they could never have done and suffered so much as they did, without extraordinary and supernatural assistance from God himself; who gave sufficient testimony to the truth of what they taught, by enabling them not only to work miracles for the confirmation of it, but to seal it too with their own blood; as both the apostles and many other disciples did; which were therefore called martyrs, that is witnesses for Christ and his gospel; because they had attested the truth and certainty of what he had there taught, in the highest manner that creatures could do it, even by laying down their lives in the defence of it. Which was so full an evidence for the excellence of the christian religion, that many were thereby brought over to the embracement of it, and many, who had before embraced it, were more fully confirmed in it.

WHEREFORE the church, to shew her gratitude to those who had done her such eminent service, and to encourage others to do the like, was wont to set apart those days on which they suffered every year, whereon to keep up the memory of it. For which end she appointed publick notaries to observe and register the several passages that occurred in any of their sufferings, which were publickly read in their congregations, upon the days dedicated every year to their memories, and therefore called by St. Cyprian, and others, *memoriae martyrum*, as being the days on which the martyrs were commemorated: which, by reason of the great number of martyrs, were so many at last, that there was scarce a day in the year, but some martyr or other had suffered, and therefore his memory was celebrated upon it.

Now our church, for many reasons, hath in a great measure laid aside this custom, observing no other martyrs days, but only those on which the holy apostles and evangelists, and such as are recorded by them, suffered. And as for all the rest, whether saints, martyrs, or confessors, we celebrate their memories all together, upon the first day of *November*, therefore called *All-Saints day*. Only our late most gracious sovereign King *Charles I.* having suffered death in our days, for the sake

of

of Christ, and his church, this day, on which he suffered it, is set apart for the anniversary commemoration of it, according to the foresaid practice and usage of the primitive church in the like cases.

THIS therefore being the reason of our assembling here upon this day, I have chosen the words which I have now read concerning the first martyr, St. Stephen, from whence to discourse briefly both of martyrdom in general, and of that in particular which we this day celebrate. Which, howsoever it may be at other times, cannot but be very seasonable at this.

THE occasion of the words was this: when St. Stephen was stoned to death for preaching the gospel of Christ, the witnesses, which were always the first that threw stones at him whom they accused, that they might do it more expeditiously, put off their upper garments, and laid them at a young man's feet who stood by, *Acts vii. 58.* whose name was *Saul*, who also was consenting to his death, *Acts viii. 1.* This *Saul*, otherwise called *Paul*, being a strict and zealous *Pharisee*, from that time forward made great havock of the church, persecuting all he could find that believed in the Lord Jesus; till going to *Damascus* for that purpose, he was miraculously converted by our Lord himself appearing to him. After which he became as great a preacher of the gospel, as he had been before a persecutor. And being come back to *Hierusalem*, while he was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance, and saw our Lord again coming to him, and saying, *make haste, and get thee quickly out of Hierusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me; Acts xxii. 18.* Which words were no sooner spoken by our Lord, but *Saul* presently called his former sins to remembrance, and made an humble confession of them to him; first, in general, saying, *Lord they know that I imprisoned, and beat in every synagogue, them that believed on thee; Acts xxii. 19.* and then the particular sin that he was guilty of, as to the matter of St. Stephen; and when the blood, saith he, of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting to his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. Where he confesseth himself to have been accessory to that horrid sin, and reckoneth up the several circumstances that made him so.

THAT I may adjust therefore my discourse both to my text, and to the occasion of our present meeting together, it will be necessary to consider, what it is properly to be a martyr, such as St. Stephen was, and how it appears that King Charles I. was such a one: and then it will be easy to shew, how this day is to be kept in memory of him.

THERE are two things to be considered in a martyr; the cause for which he suffers, and what he suffers for that cause. For altho', according to St. Augustine's observation, it is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr; yet seeing no man can be made a martyr without suffering, that must be considered as well as the cause, in our searching after the notion of a martyr.

THE cause, for which St. Stephen was called a martyr, is intimated in my text itself, where the apostle saith, *and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed. Thy martyr*, that is Christ's, to whom he spake the words. And whosoever is not Christ's martyr, as he was, is no martyr at all, in the opinion of true christians: for a martyr, in the christian notion of the word, is one that suffers only upon the account of Christ, so as to testify by his sufferings the truth and excellency of that doctrine and discipline, which Christ in his holy gospel hath taught and delivered to mankind. Such a one may be properly said to be a martyr, or witness for Christ, because it is for his sake only that he suffers, according to what Christ himself saith, *blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; Matt. v. 11.* And therefore, when the apostles were persecuted for preaching the gospel of Christ, they looked upon themselves, as so far his witnesses to the world, and rejoiced, that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for his name, *Acts v. 41.* As St. Peter also expresseth it, where he saith, *if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: 1 Pet. iv. 15.*

BUT none can be truly said to suffer for the sake, or for the name of Christ, but they who sincerely profess, and patiently suffer for that religion which he hath revealed to the world; either for the whole, as the apostles did, or else for some essential part of it, in defence of some fundamental article of the faith which he hath taught; or else, in obedience to some of those necessary commandments that he hath given us. As many of the primitive christians suffered death, rather than

they would sacrifice, or burn incense to idols, because that was plainly contrary to the precepts of the christian religion ; and therefore they were properly martyrs for Christ. And so were they in *Queen Mary's* days, who chose to suffer death, rather than worship images, pray to saints departed, or do any thing that was contrary to the doctrine or precepts of the gospel.

FOR whosoever thus resolutely contends for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, so as to set himself in good earnest to believe and obey the gospel of Christ, whatsoever it costs him, and patiently undergoes any punishment, and death itself, rather than deny the faith, or break any of the commandments of Christ ; such a one doth thereby most effectually declare and testify to the world, that he is fully persuaded in his judgment and conscience, that whatsoever Christ said is really true, and whatsoever he commanded is really just and good, and necessary to be observed ; and therefore such a one is properly Christ's martyr, and ought to be esteemed as such.

FROM whence we may likewise observe what sufferings are necessary to the making a martyr ; nothing less than death. I do not deny but that they, who suffer in their names, bodies, or estates, so as to be reproached, imprisoned, banished, stripped of all they have, maimed in their bodies, tortured upon racks, and the like, and all for the sake of Christ and his religion, such are so far witnesses for Christ, and do him great service, for which they will have a proportionable reward. But such are not properly called martyrs, but confessors ; the title of martyrs having been always appropriated to those who actually suffer some kind of death for Christ, as *St. Stephen* did. And how much soever any suffered, unless it came at last to a violent death, we do not find that their memories were publickly celebrated, as the martyrs were.

BUT whatsoever kind of death any underwent for Christ's sake, it always entitled them to the name and crown of martyrdom. As what death was there, but some of the apostles or primitive christians underwent it ? some were stoned, some hanged upon gibbets, some crucified, some burnt, some fleaed alive, some were beaten to death with clubs, some had their entrails taken out, some had their flesh torn off with pincers, some were thrown into the sea, and some to wild-beasts ; some were starved to death, and others had their limbs pluck'd asunder with horses, or branches of trees distorted. In short, there is scarce any sort of violent and cruel death, that the wit and malice of men or devils could invent, but some of the antient christians suffered it for their master's sake. One of the mildest was beheading : thus died *St. James* the apostle, and *Justin Martyr* ; thus died *St. Cyprian*, and many others, who had their heads chopped off, as *St. John the Baptist's* was ; and thus died *King Charles the martyr*, whose memory we this day celebrate.

WE may call him a martyr, for he is so called by the king, and the three estates of the realm in parliament, as well as by the whole church of *England* in convocation, assembled : for in the kalendar before our *common-prayer book*, over-against this day is set, *King Charles martyr* : and in the table of certain solemn days, for which particular services are appointed, the thirtieth of *January* is said to be, *the day of the martyrdom of King Charles the first* : and in the service itself he is called, *our late martyred sovereign* ; and *God's blessed martyr*. Wherefore, having such a cloud of witnesses for it, we cannot doubt but that he was a martyr ; for none can deny that, without arraigning the wisdom and piety both of our church and nation. But howsoever, it may not be amiss, if we briefly consider how he came to be so. And the case, in short, was this :

THE grand adversary of mankind, the Devil, having ever since the reformation been plotting and contriving to undermine, and so to overthrow the church of Christ established among us, sometimes by papists, at other times by sectaries, and still failing in his attempts upon it ; at last he used this stratagem : he, by his emissaries, possessed the people with an opinion, false as himself, that the church was not yet sufficiently reformed, nor pure enough ; and that there was no way to reform it thoroughly, but by destroying the discipline and government of it by bishops ; as well knowing, that if this was once effected, his work would be done : for then all manner of heresy and error, schism and sedition, profaneness, immorality, and atheism itself, would come in of course ; as we find it did by woeful experience.

BUT

BUT although he insinuated this absurd conceit into some unwary people, such especially as God had given up to vile affections, and had sent them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, yet there were many in the nation that would never hearken to such a false suggestion; especially the king himself, being a man of more than ordinary learning and piety. He was so far above the reach of such temptations, that he would never hearken to any proposals of that nature; whereupon the old serpent insinuated himself so far into a great part of the nation, as to stir them up to join in an unnatural war against their prince; hoping, by that means, to bring him into such streights, that he must either consent to the destruction of the church, or lose his life. And he hoped now to make good that maxim, which failed him before in *Job's* case, *skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life*; *Job ii. 4.* and his policy so far prevailed, that the king was reduced to such streights, that he must part either with his religion or his life.

FOR his rebellious subjects, having got him into their hands, demanded of him, to consent to the selling and alienating the revenues of the church, and to the abolishing and laying aside the government of it by bishops, as now, by law established, according to the institution of Christ and his apostles: and if he would not consent to the destruction of the church, according to those propositions, he could expect no other but to be destroyed himself: a sad dilemma! But the good king bore up under it with that courage as became a christian, and one who would rather sacrifice his life than his conscience to them: for when these, among other propositions, were sent to him, he consulted not with flesh and blood, but made this solemn vow and resolution, still extant in his meditations upon this subject; "I will never, *saieth he*, consent to more than reason, justice, honour, and religion, persuade me to be for God's glory, the church's good, my people's welfare, and my own peace.*" A most christian resolution, which he strictly perform'd to the last.

AND therefore, in the message which he sent from the *Isle of Wight* to the members at *Westminster*, he told them plainly, that as to the abolishing of archbishops and bishops, he could not consent to it, as he was a christian, and a king. First, as a christian, "being satisfied in his own judgment, that this order was placed in the church by the apostles themselves, and that ever since that time it had continued in all christian churches throughout the world, 'till this last century of years. And in this church, in all times of change and reformation, it had been upheld by the wisdom of his ancestors, as the great preserver of doctrine, discipline, and order in the service of God. Next, as a king, at his coronation, that he had not only taken a solemn oath, but that himself, and his predecessors, in their confirmation of the great charter, had inseparably woven the rights of the church into the liberties of the rest of the subjects.†" And as to the alienation of the church-lands, he told them, that he could not consent to that, it being a sin of the highest sacrilege.

FROM whence it appears, that he was fully convinced in his judgment and conscience, that he could not consent to what was demanded of him, without robbing God, and forswearing himself: and therefore in his divine meditations he breaks forth into this remarkable expression, "How can any man, that wisheth not my damnation, persuade me at once to so notorious and combined sins of sacrilege and perjury!‡"

Now considering that his not consenting to the destruction of Christ's church established in this kingdom, and to the alienation of the revenues belonging to it, was the great cause wherefore he suffered; and considering that the reason why he could not consent to those propositions was, because he would not transgress Christ's laws, nor dishonour his holy name and his religion, by those horrid sins of sacrilege and perjury. Hence it is plain and manifest, that it was not his own, but Christ's cause, in which he suffered; and that he dying for that cause, did thereby most clearly demonstrate to the world, that he preferred the christian religion before his own life, and chose rather to suffer death, than to destroy the government which Christ had settled in his church, or take away the revenues which were given to his service, or to forswear himself, contrary to his laws; and, by necessary consequence, that he was, in a proper sense, his martyr, as *St. Stephen* is here said to be.

* *Ein. Bas. p. 86. Ed. 1648.*
p. 161. *Ed. 1648.*

† *Dugdal. Short View of the Troubles, p. 268.*

‡ *Ein. Bas.*
FROM

FROM hence we may see into some of the grounds, upon which King *Charles* was so solemnly declared a martyr, and a standing law made for the anniversary observation of the day on which he suffered. It is in obedience to that law, that we are now assembled upon this day : and therefore it may be proper to consider how it ought to be observed.

IF King *Charles* had died in the communion of the church of *Rome*, and had suffered martyrdom for that, as he did for the church of *England*, he would have been canonized long ago by the pope, and would have had religious worship performed to him ever after, at least upon this day. But we have not so learned Christ ; but as the church of *Smyrna*, in the martyrdom of *Polycarp*, contemporary with the apostles, saith, " Christ we worship as the son of God ; and as " for martyrs, his disciples and followers, we deservedly love and honour them, " for their eminent kindness to our Lord and master, desiring to be their companions, and fellow-disciples." Thus doth the primitive, and thus doth our church celebrate the memories of martyrs : not by praying, or performing to them any sort of worship, that is due only to God ; but by praising God for them, and praying to him, that we may be such as they were. But there being something particular in this, which is not in the days of other martyrs, it is requisite, that there be something particular also in the observation of it.

WHAT that is, we may best learn from the act or statute that was made for it ; wherein the lords and commons in parliament assembled say to the king, " We do " hereby renounce, abominate, and protest against that impious fact, the execrable " murder, and unparalleled treason, committed against the sacred person and life " of our late sovereign, your majesty's most royal father, and all proceedings tending thereunto." And therefore they afterwards desire, that it may be enacted, and it was accordingly enacted, " That every thirtieth day of *January*, unless it " falls out upon the *Lord's-day*, and then the next day following, shall be for ever " hereafter set apart to be kept and observed in all churches and chapels of these " your majesty's kingdoms, &c. as an anniversary day of fasting and humiliation, " to implore the mercy of God, that neither the guilt of that sacred and innocent " blood, nor those other sins, by which God was provoked to deliver up both us " and our king into the hands of cruel and unreasonable men, may at any time " hereafter be visited upon us, or our posterity."

WHERE we may first observe, that they then agreed, and solemnly declared, that the putting King *Charles* to death was murder, and execrable murder. And so certainly it was, murder aggravated with such dismal circumstances, that our ears may justly tingle, and our hearts tremble at the hearing of it. A king murdered ! a pious, a virtuous, a most christian king murdered ! *Charles* king of *Great Britain* murdered ! murdered by his own subjects, by *Englishmen* ! formally, deliberately, publickly murdered in the face of the sun, before his own royal palace ! and all because he would not forswear himself, rob God, and destroy the church which Christ had committed to his protection and care ! and all this too, I dread to speak it, all this under the pretence of justice and religion ; the christian, the protestant religion ! Who can think of it without horror and detestation ? none, surely, but such, whose hearts are as hard as theirs who did it.

ALL others cannot but be touched to the quick, at each remembrance of it, and would humble themselves under the almighty hand of God for it, altho' there was no law to oblige them to it ; much more now there is one : a law, that requires that this day be kept every year, all the kingdom over, as a day of fasting and humiliation, to implore the mercy of God in the pardon of that execrable murder, and the other sins whereby God was provoked to suffer that to be done, and to lay such heavy judgments as he then did upon the nation, that the guilt thereof may not be charged upon the people of this land : which we accordingly do in the form of prayer appointed for this day. And therefore I need not insist upon it, but only wish, that the confessions and prayers, which we make to God upon this mournful occasion, may all come from the bottom of our hearts, and go up to heaven, accompanied with such godly sorrow and faith in Christ, that for his sake we may obtain the mercy we pray for.

BUT,

BUT to manifest the sincerity of our grief and sorrow for what was then done; we must for the future abhor and avoid, not only all such wicked practices themselves, but all occasions of them. We must take heed that we be not seduc'd into heresy, schism, or sedition, neither run into parties or factions among ourselves, nor in any of the ways that commonly tend towards them: such especially as led to the martyrdom of king CHARLES, as they had before to that of St. Stephen: of whom it is written, that *they suborned men, who said, we have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes against him,* Acts vi. 11, 12. So it was here, wicked and designing men, the better to cover and carry on their wicked designs, contrived all the ways they could to asperse the king as well as the church, giving it out among the people, and making them believe that their laws and liberties were in danger, and their religion too. And it must be confessed, that the true religion established in the kingdom was then in danger; but it was so from themselves, not from the king, who did what he could to defend it; and to defend it from them. But howsoever, by this means, *they stirred up the people* to rise in open rebellion against their sovereign, which by several steps and degrees advanced him at last to the crown of martyrdom. From whence we should all take warning, never to give ear to any ill reports that are spread abroad of the government under which we live, nor entertain, much less disperse, any groundless fears and jealousies of the publick administration. For if credulous people should be once possessed with them, we know not how far they may run beyond the bounds of duty and allegiance, into treason, rebellion, and murder itself.

It is the duty of all subjects to be always subject to the higher powers, *not only for wrath, but for conscience sake*, Rom. xiii. 5. to study to be quiet, and to mind every one his own business, leaving the government of the church and state, to those to whom the universal governour of the world hath committed it; and whatsoever happens, still to continue stedfast and immoveable in our duty to God, and for his sake, to those whom he hath set over us. For which purpose, it is very expedient and of great use, that this day be religiously observed every year, that people may be often put in mind both of the greatness of the sin of rebellion, and likewise of the dreadful consequences of it. Of which we have but too sad an instance, in that which we this day lament and mourn for.

BUT in the midst of our lamentation and mourning, we must remember also to give thanks to God, for his special grace and favour to our late martyr'd sovereign, and in him to this whole kingdom: particularly for the manifold graces and virtues, that shined so gloriously in him both all his life and at his death; when he forgave and prayed for his very murderers, as the first martyr did, after the divine example of our blessed redeemer. But these things are so well known, and so well expressed in the service for the day, that I need not enlarge upon them.

THAT which ought more especially to be observed is, the wonderful providence of God, in making this martyred prince and his family the great instrument of defending, restoring, delivering, and upholding our happy constitution in church as well as state. He himself both lived and died in the defence of it: when for the sins of the nation it was broken in pieces, so that scarce any one part of it was visible among us for some years, God sent the blessed *Martyr's* son to restore it; his daughter's son to deliver it when it was again in extreme danger; and then his other son's daughter, our most gracious *sovereign*, to keep it, as he left it, in peace and safety: for whom we have therefore infinite cause to praise God, and to love and honour, as being a branch of that royal stock that was cut down for supporting our church; much more as inheriting his virtues as well as kingdoms, as in other respects, so in relation also to our church; she being as constant an attendant at the daily prayers, as frequent a communicant at the altar, as strict an observer of the orders, and as much concerned for the peace and welfare of it, as her grandfather, of ever-blessed memory, was. To which we may add her royal bounty for the augmentation of the maintenance of the poorer clergy, in which she exceeds all that went before her. From all which we may well conclude, that although our church be always in danger from the many enemies wherewith it is encompassed, yet we have no cause to fear, but that, by God's grace and blessing upon her majesty's care and conduct, she will preserve, defend, and uphold it, in

spight of all the powers of hell, through the whole course of her reign: which I heartily wish may be the longest that ever any king or queen reign'd in this or any other kingdom upon earth.

BUT how long soever it shall be, there will be a time for her to leave her earthly crown for one in heaven. And whether it will please God that she shall leave it to the issue of her own royal body, he only knows. But this we know, that he of his great goodness hath still in reserve a numerous offspring of his martyr's royal sister, in the illustrious house of *Hanover*, every way qualify'd to succeed, if there should be occasion. And we must acknowledge it to be a great happiness to have always one of that royal family to reign over us, which hath hitherto been so great a blessing to this church and kingdom, and we hope will ever be so to the end of the world.

AMONG the many great blessings that we have received from thence, one of the most remarkable, and that which is the great glory of our church, is, that so great a prince gave such a testimony to it, as was never given to any national church besides, and sealed it with his own blood, before many thousand witnesses that stood by, as *Saul* did at the martyrdom of *St. Stephen*.

THERE are none, I suppose, here present that *flood* by when King *Charles* was murder'd; and, I hope, none that ever consented to it; but that we can truly say, as the lords and commons did in the act before-mention'd, that *we renounce, abominate, and protest against that impious fact*. This is the least we can do to preserve ourselves from the guilt of that sacred and innocent blood. But that it may not only cease to be a curse, but also become a blessing to us, we must now set a higher value upon the church for which it was shed, and labour more abundantly to adorn it, as this holy martyr did, with virtue and good works.

IN the first ages of christianity it was observed, that *the blood of martyrs was the seed of the church*; that, whereby it increas'd and multiplied. God grant that the blood of this royal martyr may have the same effect among us; that they, who are not of our communion, may be prevail'd upon to come in to it; and they, who are, may be more confirmed in it, by the testimony and example of this great monarch; who, holding constant communion with our church, by God's blessing upon the means there used, was, like *St. Stephen*, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, *Acts vi. 5.* so as to be able to prefer his duty to God before all his kingdoms and dominions, his liberty, and his life too. This was to be a christian, this was to be a saint indeed. And such we may all be, if we will but take the same course as he did for it, by keeping close to the communion of our church in all points.

FOR this was the great end wherefore the eternal son of God purchased to himself an universal church with his own blood, and by his almighty power still continues it upon earth, that men, being fallen into a state of sin, might there be sanctified, or made holy again, to the praise and glory of God. For which end he hath instituted in it several offices, sacraments, and other ordinances, to be the means whereby we may *all receive of his fulness, and grace for grace*, *Joh. i. 16.* called therefore the *means of grace*. To which he hath also added *exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature*, *2 Pet. i. 4.* *Holy, as he who hath called us is holy in all manner of conversation*, *1 Pet. i. 15.* As many thousands have found by experience, who once were sinful mortals upon earth, as we at present are, but now are glorified saints in heaven. But they were first made saints upon earth. And why may not we be made so, as well as they? we especially, who live in that part of the holy catholick church, where the fore-said means of grace are as regularly, as constantly, and as powerfully administer'd, to speak with the least, as in any place upon the face of the whole earth. So that it is our own faults, and we must blame none but ourselves for it, if we be not as great saints as ever lived. For if we be not failing to ourselves in the use, we cannot fail of the end of those holy institutions.

WHEREFORE, beloved in the Lord, let us now resolve in the name of Christ, that we will no longer content ourselves with the bare profession of our holy religion, nor with doing only some things which our church requires, nor yet with pretending and talking high for it; but that we will do all we can, as this blessed martyr did, to live up to the height of it; stedfastly believing all that is there taught, and constantly exercising ourselves in all and every one of the means of grace, which are there either administer'd or prescribed, trusting always in God for

for his assistance and blessing upon what we do. And let us never think that we do all we ought, or as we ought to do it, till we find our passions subdued, and our whole man restored to a right frame and temper again ; 'till our hearts be wholly inclined to God, and set to obey his laws, and to do all such good works as he hath prepared for us to walk in ; 'till, after the example of the saints and martyrs, and all the faithful servants of the most high God, we can live above this world, and have our conversation always in heaven, where our great Lord and master is. Then we shall think nothing too great to do, nothing too much to suffer for his sake. But if all the kingdoms upon earth were ours, we should be willing and ready to part with them all at once, rather than deny any one article of our christian faith, or wilfully transgress any one of those holy commandments, which the supreme law-giver of the world hath given us to observe : *looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God : Hebr. xii. 2.* where he is continually interceding for all those who serve him faithfully upon earth, that they may ever live with him in heaven ; with him who liveth and reigneth with the Father, and Holy Ghost, one God blessed for ever.

F I N I S.

A N

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